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Science and Theology

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THE history of theology shows that while theologians are often distracted from their proper business by contemporary scientific opinion, the principles on which it rests and the methods appropriate to it are different from those of the physical sciences. Science, in the modern and confined sense of the word, may be said to date from the sixteenth century, and it has been defined as a well-criticized body of descriptive knowledge based on observation and experiment. The word observation implies that the subject matter is visible or of the sort that could be made visible, and the word experiment, again, implies that one can bring to bear certain methods of investigation and verify their success by sensible experience. It took man a long time to find out what these methods were; once discovered they proved to be a more potent art than that of Prospero to bring a mutinous nature to heel. Various reasons, however, among which their rapid success must be counted, conjoined to hide the fact that they were not suited to all realms of knowledge and that their very success was gained through sacrifice. To the detriment of philosophy and the dismay of certain theologians the truths contained in the old philosophies based on Plato and Aristotle and the methods followed by them were set aside. Tired with the constant appeals to the authority of Aristotle and intoxicated with success, men like Bacon declared that they would "no longer be kept dancing in rings, like persons bewitched, but our range and circuit will be as wide as the compass of the world". The coincidence, therefore, of a decadent scholasticism and a new method, which by its initial successes seemed to have the world at its feet, brought confusion into the ranks of the philosophers and the theologians, and many of the latter, to use another image of Bacon, were diverted by science from their true course like the runners by the golden apples of Atalanta.

The effect of this reaction from the old was to bring metaphysics into disrepute and to bestow on the mathematical sciences the exclusive right to knowledge. That theology was involved in the downfall of metaphysics was not fully realized for some time. The ultimate consequences of a revolution usually take time to be assimilated, and so it is not surprising to find that the seventeenth century was intensely religious and that great physicists like Newton were not aware of the conflict between their faith and the marvellous mechanical world of their theories. Moreover, many religious thinkers—consciously or unconsciously in accordance with the trend of the period—abandoned thought as an aid to religion. Faith, this group proclaimed, echoing the words of the chief of the Reformers, is an experience, an assurance of confidence; "reason is directly opposed to faith, and so one should let it go; it should be slain and buried by believers". Those, therefore, who regarded the Sorbonne as "a damned synagogue of the devil" were not likely to contest in the name of religion and theology the claim of the mathematical sciences to be the exclusive proprietors of knowledge. And, as if this were not enough, two verdicts of distinguished philosophers came to be accepted, despite their differences, as the law on the relations of science and theology. The first was that of David Hume. His verdict relied on the evidence of the Cartesian philosophy and the principles professsed by contemporary science, and it came to this, that if sensation be equivalent to knowledge, then all such conceptions as God, substance, and cause must be put aside as illusory and we must content ourselves with a world of sensation and a subject which feels and is like a target dotted with experiences. Such a verdict, of course, left no room for theology nor even for science, as no meaning could be given to inductive method nor any explanation of its success. The scientists, however, did not apply the lesson to themselves; they saw only that theology had been sentenced to death. It needed a second philosopher, Kant, to grasp the extent of the damage and revise the verdict of Hume. Science, he maintained, was not an affair of sensation alone, but of a happy conjunction of it with thought. Neither sensation nor thought by itself could be productive; the former was too feeble, while the history of metaphysics showed that thought by itself was always sterile. Human nature, being composed of mind and body, could not advance in knowledge without the aid of both, and so it was well adapted to the understanding of the visible sensible world and incapable of knowing and criticizing what lay beyond it. By this means Kant justified science at the expense of theology but not of religion, as he thought; for he went on to say that if science could not find a God, neither could it criticize God if he existed, and that he did exist he thought was certain, in that he was a necessary postulate for moral experience and ideals.

This olive branch offered by Kant did not bring the lasting peace that he had hoped. It tended to obscure still further the principles on which theology rested and gave an exaggerated estimate of the mathematical sciences. No longer would philosophers use the classical arguments for the existence of God, as they were supposed to have been invalidated by Kant's criticism of them. Those who refused to accept the scientific account of the universe as complete and exhaustive had recourse more and more to some special kind of experience which was called religious. It would be impossible to give a just appreciation of the variety of forms which this experience has taken; nor is it altogether necessary, as extremist views are now being laid aside and an attempt being made to widen the term so as to include what is best in thought as well as in feeling. The formulae of Hume and Kant are, in fact, undergoing revision at the hands both of the religious thinker and the scientist. The latter has indeed continually passed beyond the limits laid down by Hume. In the nineteenth century men like Huxley and Tyndall were stirred by a religious, if anti-theological fervour. They wanted a view of life. "There is grandeur", wrote Charles Darwin, "in this view of life with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forces or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved." This lure of philosophy has become more and more potent with the coming of the revolutionary changes in science and the resulting alarums and excursions. The physicist in his laboratory may pray to be relieved of the spying of reporters and the real or bogus interest of his philosopher friends, but in the end he does not resist the appeal to say a word at the British Association or talk round theology in Gifford lectures. And in the end he can hardly do otherwise, for the classical principles of physical science have become so involved and so often checkmated by experiment that the very foundations have come to be questioned. Experiment is at loggerheads with observation, and such a situation provides a happy hunting ground for the philosopher and theologian.

I need not insist on this change of front among the scientists. It will be enough to point to what is called the new principle of indeterminacy and the danger of scientists losing their heads and thinking that they have made the first and scientific discovery of free will; to the confession of theism by J. S. Haldane, of a mathematical or architectural source by Jeans, of "one systematic fact, which is the antecedent ground conditioning every creative act" by Whitehead. These examples could easily be supplemented by quotations from the writings of such diverse thinkers as Lloyd Morgan, Julian Huxley, and Eddington. They are not at all agreed as to the means of passing beyond science or what God should signify, and few give, as Whitehead does, a sustained criticism of the foundations of science and attempt to forge a new philosophy out of the criticism. The majority, having accepted a naïve realism and having worked within the framework of the philosophy of Descartes and Hume, have been fought to a standstill by nature. In the old view, now entirely surrendered, substances were thought to move about in space unchanged; it was based on observation and assumed that fundamentally the real world must be microscopically what ordinary objects were macroscopically, that atoms and electrons were like billiard balls and always so. As Eddington says: "The Victorian physicist felt that he knew just what he was talking about when he used such terms as matter and *atoms*. Atoms were tiny billiard balls, a crisp statement that was supposed to tell you all about their nature. . . ." Hence, starting with observation, the scientist proceeded to make hypotheses on the likeness of the observed object, omitting, of course, all that was irrelevant. A change came about when the hypothesis failed to work, and the scientist felt himself forced to picture nature structurally as a physico-spatial-temporal real which must be treated very severely by means of mathematical equations. This meant that he had to start from the microscopic to the macroscopic and not vice versa, and at the present moment it has landed the scientist in agnosticism. "Now we realize that science has nothing to say as to the intrinsic nature of the atom. The physical atom is like everything else in physics, a schedule of pointer readings" (Eddington). For the moment, that is, one school of scientists has passed a self-denying ordinance. So far as they are concerned, as has been remarked by one of them, a theory that all changes are due to the influence of demons is just as feasible as any other. That scientists do not take this hypothesis seriously is, as Einstein has remarked, "a question of good taste"; they like neatness, and so "to comprehend signifies a reduction in the number of the axioms". We cannot hope to know, or at least have no means of knowing at present, how nature works. All our experiments are bound to deform it and in a constantly altered world there is no meaning in asking whether the principle of causality or uniformity holds true of it. "That it is valid statistically experience leaves no doubt, but so are the formulae of the life insurance company" (Lindemann).

Now there must be something in the scientific method which is accountable for such conclusions, and I do not think that it is far to seek. Bukharin, in his address in 1931 to the delegates of the U.S.S.R. on the Theory and Practice from the Standpoint of Dialectic Materialism, put his finger on it. "The crisis in modern physics–and equally in the whole of natural science, plus the so-called mental sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*)–has raised as an urgent problem, and with renewed violence, the fundamental questions of philosophy: the question of the *objective reality of the external world*, independent of the subject perceiving it, and the question of its *cognizability* (or, alternatively, non-cognizability). Nearly all the schools of philosophy, from theologizing metaphysics to the Avenarian-Machist philosophy of 'pure description' and renovated 'pragmatism', with the exception of dialectical materialism (Marxism), start from the thesis, considered irrefutable, that 'I' have been 'given' only 'my' own 'sensations'." As evidence for this statement he quotes, besides Mach and Avenarius, K. Pearson, Bergson, James, Vaihinger, H. Poincaré, B. Russell, Ph. Frank, M. Schlick and R. Carnap. That this diagnosis is right can scarcely be doubted. Einstein, for instance, when he tells us that "to understand is to draw one incomprehensible out of another" is relying on the assumption that we begin with sensation alone and that what thought does is to link together the sensations by means of some descriptive theory. The same view is very clearly expressed by Lindemann. "The primary data which man shares with other animals are the experiences we call sense-data. Thanks to his memory, each individual can compare such experiences with previous ones. As civilization has advanced mankind has been more and more concerned to collect such sense-data into a system subsuming the experiences which had been undergone and into which each fresh experience fitted. Any system capable of fulfilling these conditions is satisfactory; which one is preferred can be merely a matter of individual taste."

What, then, is the position of the theologian in the light of the teaching of modern science? All depends on whether he accepts or not the claims and presuppositions of that science. There are some who are thankful that science is now taking up such an agnostic attitude; the mist is no longer in the air concealing the heavens, but covering the ground. And if this new hope seems to many, including myself, precarious, it must be remembered that not only the the-

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ologian but the scientist also has been glad to avail himself of the present plight of physics to invoke religion. In genuine humility some have turned from their so-called fictions or descriptions to a belief founded on revelation or religious experience or mysticism. In the first case, the belief takes the form of fideism, a view often taken up in the past and quickly dropped because it interferes with the longing of a man to think out his origin and destiny. Such a belief has given comfort to many, but I think that it must necessarily be episodic and not permanent, as man cannot forswear for a long time all thought on his origin and destiny, even though divine revelation is surrounded, as by a Karl Barth, with an atmosphere of apocalypse and prophecy. As to experience and mysticism, much depends on what is meant by these terms, and one of the hopeful signs of the times is the amount of careful study and analysis that has been given to them. Owing to the course which religion and science have followed since the Reformation, experience has unfortunately been assumed to be in some ways irrational or super-rational, and this view has had support from philosophers like James and Bergson. I am sure that this way of religion is a cul-de-sac, and there are welcome signs that this is being recognized. Books such as *Philosophical Theism* by Dr. Tennant pay scant attention to the argument from experience. Dean Inge and Dr. Matthews are less hard-hearted, but they, too, protest against the uncritical acceptance of experience as the one guarantee of religion. After all, in no other sphere of human activity or passion are the truth and value of the feelings and intuitions and experience judged by their evidence alone, and religion can carry no conviction to one who wishes to ascertain the grounds of its truth, if it relies on such a subjective standard.

Without deserting the test of experience, some do try to make it less subjective. One way is to borrow the scientific method of verification. They say that here undoubtedly is an experience which cannot be taken into account by science. It should not, however, for that reason be dismissed, for if we look at its place and history in human life, we see that it is responsible for some of the highest values and that life would be infinitely poorer were it taken away. It cannot, therefore, be false or illusory. It will be noticed that the same argument is here being used for religion as has been used in the defence of morality and art. A physical world as described for us in terms of physics leaves no room for quality, for beauty or goodness; man, therefore, must be in some other way in contact with them, and it is fair to put the religious sense alongside that of the aesthetic and the moral. The trouble with this argument is that it still hides itself under vague titles, and many have cast doubt on the precise object of aesthetics, questioning whether it be wholly objective. This difficulty might be overcome if, as Otto has maintained in his *Das Heilige*, it could be shown that mankind possesses a sense of the divine. Valuable as Otto's contribution is to theology, I do not think that his analysis of the Holy and the "numinous" is above criticism, for we are left at the end still wondering what precisely is the sense, whether it is chiefly emotional or intellectual, and if it is intellectual, how God can be said to be apprehended directly. Dr. Matthews and others regard this view as an improvement on that of Schleiermacher, who held that religion is a "feeling of absolute dependence", and Dr. Matthews himself prefers the expression of Boutroux, "the Beyond which is within", and looking for some deep and permanent needs of the human spirit to explain man's religiousness, finds them in "two salient and ineradicable needs of the spirit . . . the need for unity and the need for the substantiation of value".

Thus we see that the theologians belonging to the school of experience are moving to a sounder position than that held formerly when science was supposed to hold exclusive rights over reason and religion was referred to an irrational or super-rational experience. It cannot be said, however, that they are out of the wood yet, and there is one strange assumption which even now remains unquestioned. It sticks out in the words of Dr. Matthews when he looks "for some deep and permanent needs of the spirit". Here, we notice, need is the criterion, and God and religion are brought into court to have their claims settled on the one count, whether I want them or not. This brings out the revolutionary change in theology which passed almost unnoticed. The old theology began with God and then proceeded to argue from His nature to what must be the right relation of man to such a being, and this it defined as religion; now we begin with what we should desire, with religion as a human value, and cut a pattern of God to suit our desires. This may be a legitimate way of proceeding, and if, of course, we are afraid of intellect in religion it may be thought to be the only way, but it remains surely a very dangerous one; it suggests, in fact, that a god, if he exists, may take his importance from us and be like a sleeping Endymion or impotent until we entice him into life by our calls upon him. Acting on this belief theologians have made a close study of the common motives which lie behind all the various manifestations of religion, and I should say that the chief value of such work lies in this, that it has taught us much about the nature of man; but it is not so clear that it will suffice for an understanding of religion. The old method was to take the data of any experience and to submit them to the test of reason; philosophy was considered to be such a reflection and it offered us an enlightened and austere vindication in systematized form of all that was given, no matter how, in experience. Just as in science, physical or biological, medical or psychical, the data cannot be taken at their face value but must be sifted and approved of by reason, with the help of inductive or deductive methods, so in religion, save that theology might have to rely more on deduction than on observation and experiment. The disinclination to follow this way can be traced back to the rift made in the past between reason and faith (of which I have already spoken) and the anxiety of so many theologians to remove religion from the embrace of that mechanical determinist philosophy which dominated Europe for a while and was supposed to be the supreme work of the human mind.

The time seems now to have come when both the scientist and the theologian are beginning to talk a similar language instead of looking at each other from a distance. The theologian is, as I have explained, deserting the ground of mere experience and not only has science forsworn its pretensions to an exclusive knowledge of reality, but it is in danger of moving too far in the opposite direction. The most promising sign is not the scepticism of a Lord Russell, nor the overturning of the tables of science and philosophy alike by a Wittgenstein, nor even the tentative efforts at a theology made by Sir James Jeans, but the thorough overhauling of scientific presuppositions by Whitehead. The difference between these two latter is that Jeans still takes as the standard of all thinking about reality mathematics and not metaphysics, and so permits only a God who can be addressed in mathematical terms, whereas Whitehead, having demolished this assumption of Jeans's, is able to go ahead with a new philosophy of nature and a much more comprehensive account of God. This, I think, is a vital difference, as great, in fact, as that which divided Plato with his intelligible world from the atomists, and one, too, which gives scope for a theology properly so-called.

The line of thought newly opened up by Whitehead is one which was followed by the older tradition of theology, and it matters little whether one agrees with his conclusions or not so long as the significance of his point of view be grasped. The great successes gained by the introduction of the mathematical methods at the Renaissance concealed the fact that that victory was gained at a price. *Impera* indeed but *divide*, and this division meant the choice of an abstraction, the sacrifice of the hope of knowing the world wholly and intuitively. Even so, all might have gone well if the nature of this sacrifice had been kept in mind, but success suggested contrast with slow-moving metaphysics, and the philosophers themselves fell under the spell of science. Hence it was laid down that our knowledge was confined to the sensible world, "that the primary data which man shares with other animals are the experiences we call sense-data". There are two mistakes here which are closely allied. Beginning with observation man is aware of a sensible something, a thing possessing extension and colour at least; but the secret of the success of man as a scientist was to ignore the thing and the quality of it and to concentrate exclusively on the one part of the object which was calculable and so reducible to "a system of measurable relations between countable *x*'s". What was left over was first ignored and then in time came to be regarded as not falling within knowledge. Thus the first mistake arose, and the second was a corollary of the first, consisting in the erroneous idea that we knew only our sensations. Thus it came about that with one fell stroke the supreme distinctions between the noetic or intelligible world and the aesthetic or sensible world built up by Plato and his successors were destroyed. The truth, which it now concerns us most to admit, is that empiricism is in its last agony, that we start with reality, with sensible reality indeed, but still reality, and that herein lies an essential difference between man and the animal. Thought is not a temporal afterthought; it works by means of sense and in dependence on sense, but it is instantaneous in the composite act of man which tells him that he is aware of some sensible real thing. I should like to go on to show that no sound theory of what is called the universal can be given, unless we grant that the particular can never be given first and in isolation, but I must hurry on to give two consequences of this truth. The first is that on this theory an escape from agnosticism is provided for science. Trusting itself alone and with no roots in reality, no sooner do its results fail to work out than it despairs and calls itself a maker of fictions. If, on the other hand, science recognizes itself as a legitimate abstraction within an act of knowledge which of its essence grasps the real, then it should expect to progress alongside the real and to give a report which, if limited by abstraction and inadequate, is nevertheless drawn from that real and informatory about it. But it may be asked why are the methods of mathematical science employed at all and with such desperate zeal by man if, as I say, the mind transcends sense and looks out on the fields of reality as they are in their own nature? The answer to this brings us to the heart of the matter. It is true that the mind, being a mind, is able to glimpse the intelligible, noumenal world; it is able to traverse it from end to end and reconstruct its ultimate and far-reaching principles, but the vision, though bounded by the real, is nevertheless imperfect. There is only one spot on which it rests with comfort, the terra firma of the sensible. Kant was nearly right when he said that the mind needed the help of sense to escape from empty formulations. He wrecked his system when he went further and protested that we have no knowledge of the thing in itself. What he should have said is that we must have some knowledge, if we have knowledge at all and if empirical science is to stand, of the nature of reality, and that that must be eked out with the help of sense. If it be true that we are citizens of no mean realm of being, we have no intuition of it; we read its meaning through the veil of sense, through its appearances. Not that we first perceive appearances and then infer a reality; this may be necessary when we want to reach some particular cause or substance; but we always read through the phenomena something of the meaning and intelligible character of the universe. If also we are forced always to represent to ourselves what we know in terms of some image or material symbol, as we are proved to do by the very use of such words as apprehension, concept, and understanding, we can transcend the limitation of the symbol and see that it signifies the intelligible though it represent the material.

Now if this correction of current assumptions be accepted, then the function of mathematical science can be elucidated and a way opened for a theology worthy of the name. The idea of man as a by-product of a vast mechanical system or just a highly sensitive animal must end finally in a *felo de se* of man. But neither will the opposite extreme do, that all goes on in his mind or that he is the creator of values. The truth about him is both uplifting and humiliating; by reason of his mind he is, as Plato and Aristotle saw, godlike, and by reason of his limitations he has to look before and after, to use discursive reasoning, to work empirically for the most part. He can see dimly infinite distances, but he has to use his two feet to walk and explore them. The ancient preferred to sit still and satisfy himself with what he could see in outline, the modern has found out a substitute in the mathematical methods, which resemble an aeroplane, with all the limitations that come from looking down on a flat surface. (To save misunderstanding, let it be remembered that in this simile the distances are seen by sense, whereas the vision of reality and its outlines is of the intellectual order and therefore indefectible.) Both procedures are right, both requisite. Physical science tells us about the material world in so far as it is calculable, and one of the characteristics, though not the only characteristic, of physical being is that it is measurable and numerable; and again there are characteristics of the metaphysical world which are intelligible, and even if they have to be represented to ourselves, because of our natural reliance on sense, in sensible or anthropomorphic terms, we can be sure that we are knowing something of the nature of reality and we can, by a method to be explained later, rectify the limitation imposed upon us by our way of thinking.

The advantage of this theory of knowledge is that it brings within one sweep physical nature, the sensible world, man, and a possible highest order in which truth, goodness and beauty abide. There are no unbridgeable gulfs separating science from philosophy and philosophy from theology. The fatal sharp distinction first imposed on the modern world by Descartes in philosophy between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, and by Luther in theology between faith and reason, is destroyed. Science is not based merely on sensation and it is not the only form of knowledge, and there is no need to place this over-reliance on human experience and spoil supra-sensible knowledge by calling it mystical or supra-rational, or, in a less confident mood, subjective and anthropomorphic. The harm caused by so doing has been considerable, as might be illustrated by the history of such terms as substance, self, nature, and even idea; but one example may suffice, that of cause. The scientist, starting with a confused notion of sense-experience, kept the notion of cause both because at first he pictured atoms as infinitesimal billiard balls and because he persevered, without being fully aware of it, with some of the old metaphysical notions. The more, however, the mathematical methods came into force and the more he took over the standpoint of Hume, the less pertinent did the idea of cause appear. Now it is claimed in many quarters that there is no need of it at all. That may well be because physical science has chosen an aspect of the real which can be treated without it; at any rate that is for the physicists to decide. But the persisting presence of the notion is due to the fact that cause does belong to the real order from which science has abstracted its subject matter. Even the philosophers, however, have been frightened of saying this because in the train of Descartes they have broken the chain which united together in some sort the world of sense and the world of intellect, the realm of quantity, quality, life, and spirit. Hence they took their own experience of causality as subjective, as peculiar and doubtful, and considered that it would be anthropomorphic and illegitimate to transfer it to the physical world. And so arose the habit of speaking of logical connection as if it had nothing to do with connections in reality, and of laws of thought which ruled no kingdom of the world. Such a philosophy, thank heaven, is no better than a nightmare, and the truth is that our thought from the beginning takes its complexion from reality, and that just as it is impossible to think without using the category of ground and consequent, so it is impossible to think of reality without the principle of causality. That is not to say that cause is used in exactly the same sense of matter, of will, and of God. There are various orders within the real and the differences between them are not merely nominal; matter is not spirit nor spirit matter, and yet they are not wholly alien; they both exist and are something, and this unity is not just nonsense, a *flatus vocis* idly used. Even God falls within this dark majesty of being, and that is why our thought of Him touches reality, though from afar off. And so it is that we meet cause in every order of the real. The scientist confesses to this because his inquiry involves the questions, why and wherefore, and though by a self-denying ordinance he confines his further inquiry to phenomena and their succession, even there he stands on the brink of real causes and profits by the fact in the applied sciences. Human beings, again, know what self-determination is and see the analogy which exists between the world outside, their own bodily activities, and their will; and lastly God fulfils in His own way completely the meaning of cause, for, whereas in nature and in ourselves the why and the wherefore had to be sought beyond the event and beyond our own existence and life, God is his own explanation; He requires nothing to support Him or render Him intelligible; He is complete and dependent solely on Himself; He is therefore cause in the fullest sense of the word.

(*To be concluded*)

A Letter on the Movies

My dearest Philippa,

What a month the final question in your last letter has given me! "What do you think about the movies?" My first impulse was to finish my own next letter to you with "I think the movies are terrible", which would have saved me a great deal of trouble; but the day after I heard from you I came down-town in a bus behind a group of bright and intelligent schoolgirls, and they were passionately absorbed in an argument about the respective merits of Katharine Hepburn and Dorothea Wieck. They were obviously well informed; far better informed than they would have been, I am sure, about any aspect of literature, and they were all about your age. My conscience turned over, my heart sank, and I began to catch up with the cinema.

At least, I think I have, but you will probably disagree. In that case I shall have to let you have the last word, for once. Eternal fires would be mild punishment for me beside a prospect of sitting in a moving-picture theatre looking and listening throughout eternity. And that in spite of the fact that the pictures I saw were those which promised to be less deadly than the common run, and that they certainly were, in most cases, better than those I saw before I abandoned picture-going some years ago.

It was about two years before the arrival of "sound effects" that I concluded I had had enough of the loves of the morons to last me a lifetime. After that I went about once in six months, and then, usually, to see a foreign film. The German and French films seemed much better than our own product, but even they suffered from observing the strange conventions which grew up with the growth of the huge cinema palaces. It always seemed astonishing, for instance, that anything remotely entitled to be called an art should, even though it was developed mainly at the hands of illiterate men, so completely ignore a technical matter like what is called, in the writing of fiction, "the point of view", and, in painting, "perspective". The picture-goer was introduced early, and unprotestingly, to such a hotch-potch of viewpoints and perspectives as one could hardly believe might be found anywhere. One moment he was watching the ant-like crawlings of pygmies; the next moment giants mouthed and grimaced before him; he saw his heroes from the top, the side, from below, through a key-hole–and all without the intermission of a second for orientation. In those early days, when the picture–almost entirely because of ignoring the simple precaution of following one character at one distance which any hack-writer could have taught the scenarist –grew too involved for comprehension, there appeared on the screen a subtitle which remained there, the only stationary thing in a world madly in flux, long enough for the dullest wits in the audience to decipher it three times.

Those were my intermissions; in those moments I closed my eyes and thought heretical thoughts while I counted forty. But the reprieves were not long enough. They came often, but the opportunity to consider, to reflect, to object and approve reasonably must be given more than half a minute. One of the healthiest conventions of the stage is the intermission between acts. The playwright who realizes that his audience is going to have time to return to independent thought, to consult companions, to agree or disagree with his notions, is likely to be a more scrupulous, or at least a more painstaking, artist. Until the long programme-pictures came into vogue, I would have said that man was always and everywhere a reflective creature; that he would demand these pauses in his arts to allow for the establishment of his judgements. The movies have not so much proved me wrong as convinced me that those arts are sounder which take reasoning for granted. The protagonists of the early pictures spoke of the movies' greater flexibility in comparison with the stage or the printed word; but greater flexibility does not make, or even promise, a greater art, since the limitations of its form no less than its content contribute to the making of a masterpiece. At any rate, in the movies the result of a continuous, ever-shifting spectacle on the audience is stupefying. Perhaps this is the reason for the cynical disregard of probability shown by the directors and scenarists of Hollywood. Criticism of the moving-picture as it is presented today can only take place in retrospect; and the mind, which loves order, does for the moving-picture what should have been done for it in the studio: it selects, rearranges, remembers excellences, ignores idiocies, and so manages to treat the picture with some respect.

At least, I suppose that it is what happens, or we should have no movie-critics. But I, for once, have the advantage, so deeply approved today, of coming to the moving-pictures in the rôle of the Noble Savage.

Never a devotee of the youngest and liveliest art, I gave it up entirely with the arrival of "sound-effects". I *had* been hopeful. I thought that the moment speech was introduced into the cinema it would have to return humbly to its progenitors, the stage and the book. But after a little experience with voices that mooed and blatted, with crumpled letters which sounded like the fall of a ton of scrap-iron, I seceded. For years the picture-houses saw me no more.

Before your letter arrived I had been lured back, once, to see *Little Women.* It was a sentimental pilgrimage, of course, and I came out into the lobby with mixed feelings. If this was what the screen had got around to in my absence, perhaps I had been wrong to abandon it. It will be no news to you that I had reservations; but the photography was good, there was less jumping about between scenes, very few giants in agony, and not many pygmies. The old houses, old costumes, old furniture were lovely, and there was almost a minimum of horse-play about hoop-skirts. The casting was inspired; I hardly dared hope for a Beth who would look like Beth. Professor Bhaer of the screen for the first time removed my youthful rebellious feeling that Jo might as well have married her grandfather, and Jo's eternal "Christopher Columbus!" became for the first time an expletive which really might have been used by a girl in her teens. And the photoplay remained, for the most part, faithful to the sequence of the book.

So much was good. Certainly there was somewhere at work a healthy piety toward a book which has been loved for generations, in spite of its occasional sentimentality. There had clearly been every intention of recapturing for us the spirit of the sixties. That made my discomfort doubly uncomfortable, for, in spite of those good intentions, something had gone amiss. Every time it had been necessary to write in a scene which Miss Alcott had not provided, and once when some presumptuous soul decided that the author's account of Beth's dying was not sufficiently moving, Hollywood demonstrated once more—and how flatly!—that it knows New England and New Englanders only by hearsay.

The first mistake came well toward the beginning of the picture. Mrs. March is shown with a companion at her work of gathering clothes for the Northern soldiers. The companion congratulates her because her children are daughters. Clasping a garment to her breast, turning a tumultuous visage to the audience, Mrs. March (that woman of heroic courage, in real life and in the book) gasps, "If it weren't for my four girls I couldn't *bear* it!"

Well, she wouldn't say that. You are only one remove farther from women like Mrs. March than I am, Philippa, and I am sure you know that for one of them to say that she could not bear any hardships or sorrow or misfortune would have been to her what desertion in the face of the enemy was to her men. They could and did bear the troubles of their lives quietly, in those days when there was no wide-spread belief that rebellion is dramatic and virtuous.

The other scene was, as I said, Beth's dying. Miss Alcott was content to do it without hysteria: "And on that breast where Beth drew her first breath, she quietly drew her last." That wasn't good enough for the pictures, nor the vigil of Beth's mother and sister, alone in the night. No; the room must be crowded with characters: the doctor holds the white hand, Mrs. March sighs on Jo's shoulder, and when the sad announcement comes she shrieks and falls wildly on the still form in the bed. I was much inclined to go out and send letters to Hollywood; to tell them that, if only in the interests of anthropology, they should know that the women of New England do not "raise the keen", or lament with shrieks. But I've no doubt they would say that in that case they had done us all a service, softening our hard contours and showing us as equally human with the rest of the world.

So, if I had not had that question from you I might have gone another six months, or until I forgot that this Jo was hoydenish in the style of Manhattan today rather than of Concord in the sixties; but since this was by no means a bad picture, I took up my duty to you with fair cheerfulness. I did, as I've confessed, coddle myself a little. *Death Takes a Holiday* seemed, from its reviews, rather more my kind of amusement than something called *A King for a Night*—which was all about prize-fighters, mistresses, murders and electric chairs—and so I went to the former. I had not seen the play on the stage, but I rather think my major complaint would have been the same. That Death should take human form for three days is not only an acceptable but an imaginative idea. But that Death, knowing and trying to convey to mortals that he is no enemy of man, that on the contrary he is a liberator into a wider life, should still long for human experience, is harder to believe. That he should be shown, as here, the initiate of mysteries, but also as simultaneously sinister and wistful, is to confuse every idea which might start into life from the premises of the play.

I suppose shrieks to curdle the blood must be part of the Hollywood tradition now. You must tell me about them. Do they get worse through the years? My intensive picture-going has covered barely four weeks, yet I am already as hardened to shrieks as a Torquemada. It will take the combined force of all their wind-machines to lift me from my chair very soon—or would if I had not already decided to forsake the movies now that my task is done and allow my ear to recover its native innocence.

There is a great deal of shrieking in *Death Takes a Holiday*; but there are some beautiful scenes, and the character of the young girl who was in love with Death before he took human shape, somewhat as the saints are said to be in love with death, was well imagined and well played. (Yes, I know her name; and it is no lack of generosity which keeps me from filling these pages with the names of the players of these parts. It is simply that I am convinced, now, that much of the retarded development of the cinema is attributable to the star-system. A kind of gossipy, prying interest in personalities will keep an audience from realizing that the play unreeled before its eyes is loosely knit, extravagant and redundant.)

Next I ran down a play which sounded very promising: *I Am Suzanne*. It turned out to be as heartbreaking a job of botching a good idea as you could imagine. That a little dancer should be admired for all the accidental glamour of her stage-life, that she should fall in love with a puppet-maker who copies her for a character among his puppets, that he should love the doll he has made himself better than he loves the dancer—that is an allegory which has an almost universal application. As long as the picture preserved its remote and fairy-tale quality it was truly lovely. The puppets—the Piccoli—were fascinating, and used so freshly and imaginatively that for a while I thought I had found a picture good enough to compensate for every dull hour I had ever spent in dark and stuffy places. But then, just as the picture's force and charm was gathering to a climax, Hollywood went mad. With that naïve assumption of the newly rich that if a little of something is good a great deal too much will reproduce the bliss of paradise, Hollywood threw in a ballet (with a nightmare of the heroine's as excuse) which combined a London Christmas pantomime, a troupe of Apache dancers dressed as devils, fumes from the evocation-scene of Parsifal, Satan, and six hundred extras.

All the carefully built illusion vanished. Nothing was left but a tawdry spectacle in which star-actors strutted and smirked. No card castle ever fell so quickly or so completely at the opening of a door. Perhaps the story, which was slight and delicate if told as its author meant it to be told, would not have used up quite enough film-footage and in order to make a picture which should have lasted an hour stretch over an hour-and-a-half that grotesque bedlam was inserted. In that case can't we protest to our Congressmen? Or is the abuse too solidly established to be attacked? All movies are one-third too long; that is one of the many conclusions I came to this month.

As the Earth Turns came next. I had expected to like it: the story of the daughter of a Maine farmer who loved the land and knew that her happiness lay in staying on it. The book from which it was taken, you remember, was a best-selling novel. I had liked its idea better than I liked the book, which was choppy, and rather indigestibly full of hot biscuits and boiled dinners. The picture followed the book more in its defects than in its virtues. What little drama there is in both is made of one of those misunderstandings between lovers which seem so easily cleared away that they could never have arisen in the first place. This misunderstanding vanished as unaccountably as it arose, perhaps because so much time had been spent in filming every incident in the first of the book that there was no space for the resolution of the action at the end. The earth turned very rapidly indeed at the close of the picture; one left the theatre feeling glutted with changing seasons, and rueful to think that one of the few pictures to celebrate life on the farm as desirable should make that life seem so very dull.

It was at this picture that I noticed one other excellence of the stage which the moving-picture makes no attempt to imitate. Any company of barn-stormers playing *Way Down East* would have been ashamed not to try, at least, to reproduce the slow, cautious, humorously inflected soft speech of Maine. I had looked forward to hearing it almost with nostalgia, but I was disappointed. There were as many different accents on the screen as there were actors; and to hear the heroine speak her ungrammatical Maine-dialect lines in a voice straight from one of the best finishing-schools was the one funny thing in a humourless picture. I hope the box-office receipts of *As the Earth Turns* will not frighten other producers away from trying to do the same thing better.

The House of Rothschild I am going to treat rather cavalierly. You will certainly see it, anyway, and it is well worth seeing. It is spoken of everywhere as one of the most successful attempts of the day in interpreting the Jew to his Gentile neighbour. In short, it is a propaganda picture, very skillfully and, I think, very honestly done. I mean by that that I am sure Mr. Arliss's intentions were of the noblest. But, once again, it is hard to believe that a picture or a book which shows its Jewish characters as uniformly fine and which restricts villainy to the Christian characters is in the long run anything but one more faggot on the huge pyre that is being piled now in every country, and which may be set alight by any stray spark of hatred struck by any racial clash. The Gentile half of the crowd which roars approval at every showing of this picture will roar more loudly later for having been, as they will think—for they will be then as now at the mercy of skillful demogoguery—once betrayed into shouting their applause for the other side. Propaganda is a two-edged sword, and never sharper than when it is shown to us not as a weapon but in the guise of a work of art. If your blood runs cold at the idea that there could ever be a pogrom in this country, be careful when you see these pictures and read these books which purport to retrieve a balance but which actually only add one more injustice to the long toll of injustices between Gentiles and Jews.

But as a picture *The House of Rothschild* illustrates again all Mr. Arliss's superb showmanship and superb acting. It is true that his Disraeli is his Voltaire and his Voltaire is his Nathan Rothschild; but there can never be enough of Mr. Arliss for my taste, and here he is at his best. The history is a little garbled, but not unforgivably; and the costumes, the stage-settings, the casting, are all beyond praise.

Last of all I come to *Alice in Wonderland* and some contemporary comics. If you saw it you will agree with me that it was far more like an unimaginative (and drably American) child's nightmare of both the *Alice* books than like anything Lewis Carroll ever wrote. The mixture was terrible–something as if chess-players stopped now and then and played a hand or two of cards among the chess pieces, going back and trying to remember where they were in their chess game when the cards bored them. Let us pass lightly over the dreadful outrage to the dream atmosphere done by the comic cartoon of "The Walrus and the Carpenter"; the mistake of translating the English idiom into purest Americanese for the benefit of the illiterate; the liberties taken with the sequence of Carroll's mad logic. It was all a dreadful mistake, from which only the rôles of Humpty-Dumpty and the Red Queen can be salvaged. The heroine was an enchanting child, but she was not Alice.

Perhaps after all this grumbling it may endear me to you if I tell you that the dreariest tedium in a picture-show is bearable for me if at the end of it I can see a reel of Mickey Mouse. I saw *Alice* at a children's matinee (with a small voice behind me asking earnestly "Will her mother like *that*?" whenever Alice did anything subversive of nursery etiquette), and the rest of the programme was given over to Walt Disney's animals and fairy-tales. For the first time I saw *The Three Little Pigs*, and I loved them. But–oh, dear, here I go again!–I also saw a version of *The Little Red Hen* and of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and mourned for a generation who were meeting them in this form for the first time. If you knew them already, this impish variation of their careers and histories was fun. But every child should meet Jack first as a hero, not a pop-eyed, round-cheeked, bouncing cherub. Fate played into his hands after his thoughtless selling of the cow for the beans, but Fate never asked him to act the buffoon. And, indeed, a giant who is funny cannot be very terrible; so of the old Jack we knew there was nothing left but his quick wits. *The Little Red Hen* was done in verse, but not *the* verses. With all respects to Mr. Disney and his staff, the old jingle was better.

"Oh, well," said a friend of mine, when I told her what I was writing you about, "the movies are for the children of immigrants. *Our* children are all right; they don't take the pictures seriously." I was unconsoled. It is quite true that no child from a safe home will take serious harm from these screen-plays. You, for instance, will get inured to shrieks and horrors, which is too bad, but since you can see around you every day how gentle people do act and live it will do you no lasting harm. You will not believe that all women scream at their husbands like fishwives, that quick impertinence is the same as wit, that cruelty and terror are the commonplaces of daily life. The tragedy is that "the children of immigrants" may and often do believe it–really believe that the movies bring them news of how we live in our impregnable and enviable fastnesses. And when they have aped the hairdressing and the lacquered nails, when they have learned to stride like last season's heroine or mince like the heroine of this, they think that they are ready with no more ado to take their place among more fortunate people. Then they must learn that the movies cheated them. No Open Sesame was provided, after all. Maturity, mother-wit, and common sense save many; the rest are left discontented, unhappy and angry, victims to a shoddy "culture" and an imitation art.

Solution? I wish I had one. I suspect that a great deal could be done, though, by the Miss Greers of this world, if they would steadily and contagiously talk about the enjoyment of good reading, or if parents could insist that for every picture seen a traditional book must be read. Now that I have had this month's experience, I no longer wonder that many of our contemporary novels are sprawling, shapeless, unemphasized things, full of false leads and sensational plays for shocked attention. They are being written by the first generation of movie-going writers, and reflect like a mirror every flaw of that amorphous "art."

Your loving godmother,

DOROTHEA BRANDE

The Cult of D. H. Lawrence

W. P. Witcutt

SINCE 1928 D. H. Lawrence has been accepted as the prophet of English neo-paganism. His influence is now immense, and it is still increasing. It can be gauged from the effect his ideas have had on two leaders of the intelligentsia of the "Left"; to a lesser degree on Middleton Murry, the Communist editor of *The Adelphi*; and to a very much greater degree on the novelist Aldous Huxley.

Lawrence rejected Christianity, and he rejected Science. That is his significance. There is not much need now for the Christian to prepare an apologetic against the exaggerated pretensions of Science; in a short time he will be obliged to take up the position of defender of Science against those who would deny that its discoveries have any value whatsoever. Of this breed Lawrence was the forerunner.

This double rejection may be traced to the same root—the rejection of the primacy of the intellect; the denial, to use the words of Aldous Huxley, Lawrence's most faithful disciple, "that there's an intrinsic superiority in mental, conscious, voluntary life over physical, intuitive, instinctive, emotional life".

It is heresy; it is the worst of heresies—the denial of the value of the instrument by which we can come to the knowledge of the truth. It is, in fact, the denial that there is such a thing as truth. For the English neo-pagans go this far. " 'The Truth' does not exist", says Richard Aldington in his Introduction to Lawrence's *Apocalypse*.

Apocalypse is the essence of Lawrence. It contains every one of his ideas, worked out more fully, perhaps, than in any other of his books. It is brilliant; and it is poisonous. All Lawrence's errors are to be found in *Apocalypse*.

Lawrence's errors go in series; they do not depend one upon the other, so that a refutation of the first in logical priority will mean an automatic refutation of the rest, as in Middleton Murry's book on *God*, where the order of thought is so arranged that a refutation of the Nominalist theory of knowledge upon which the whole structure is based ought logically to bring the author to the gates of Rome.

Lawrence's errors can be classified in two series. The first are philosophical; the second historical.

To deal with the philosophical series first. They seem to spring from an error as to the action of the will. Intellectualists like Murry and Huxley can begin with a mistaken theory of knowledge; it was more natural for Lawrence to go wrong about the action of the will and the emotions. The primary action of the will is love; and Lawrence's initial error is, accordingly, about this primary action.

Lawrence placed individuality and love in opposition. They are incompatible, he tells us. One must go.

> To yield entirely to love would be to be absorbed, which is the death of the individual: for the individual must hold his own, or he ceases to be "free" and individual. . . . The individual *cannot* love: let that be an axiom.*

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* All quotations are from *Apocalypse*.

So much for natural love. How about Christian love?

> It works out the same. You love your neighbour. Immediately you run the risk of being absorbed by him. You must draw back, you must hold your own. The love becomes resistance. In the end, it is all resistance, and no love. . . . Christ's way of loving your neighbour leads to the hideous anomaly of having to live by sheer resistance to your neighbour, in the end.

What is to be done, then? Give up love? No, says Lawrence, give up individuality.

> Let us give up our false position as Christians, as individuals. . . . My individualism is really an illusion. . . . There is nothing of me that is alone and absolute except my mind, and we shall find that the mind has no existence by itself, it is only the glitter of the sun on the surface of the waters.

It is easy to see how this position leads to the assertion of the priority of emotional and sensual life over intellectual life.

It seems a curious train of logic, but is a very natural one for a man like Lawrence, sensitive and emotional to an unusual degree. He found a duality in his nature; the love that would surrender to another will, and the individualism that maintained a stubborn resistance. He chose to sacrifice–in theory at any rate–individuality.

At first sight this position may seem ridiculous. But is it? Try to work it out for yourself and refute Lawrence. It is not so easy. Love does mean absorption; the surrender of one will to the will of another; an invitation, as it were, to the surrender of individuality. And this the individual in man instinctively resists, after a time. Lawrence would deny individuality, in order to allow this fusion of identities to take place. Of course he was attempting the impossible. He was trying to deny man's nature. One cannot shake off one's individuality; one's apartness from the rest of things.

Yet the dilemma remains. Our ancestors would have solved it by an appeal to God, in whom alone can the will find rest.

Nam quoqueversum se verterit anima hominis, ad dolores figitur alibi praeterquam in te; tametsi figitur in pulchris extra te et extra se.

[For whichever way the soul of man turns itself, unless toward Thee, it cleaves to sorrows, even though it fastens itself on things which are beautiful, apart from Thee, and apart from itself.]*

Lawrence was attempting the impossible. A theologian would say that he was trying to love human beings with a love which cannot be given to them, since to give them such a love would be to make them one's end.

But Lawrence was disabled, by the prejudices of his time, from solving his problem by a mystic love of God. In his own mind, these prejudices took the form of two historical errors.

The first was that the idea of God had been "separated out" in time; that it could not possibly correspond to any reality, because it had been evolved fairly late in the history of mankind:

> The very ancient world was entirely religious and godless. . . . The whole cosmos was alive and in contact

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* St. Augustine: *Confessions*, IV, 10.

with the flesh of man; there was no room for the intrusion of the God idea.

Now Lawrence was no evolutionist. To him progress was progress backwards. He would have gone back beyond Socrates. To him the argument that the ancients knew not God was convincing. Possibly the researches of Andrew Lang and Father Schmidt into primitive monotheism would have shaken him in this attitude. I do not know. These matters are decided by the will not to believe, as well as by the light of the intellect. A blind prejudice can overlook any amount of evidence.

Lawrence was certainly prejudiced against Christianity. The reason for this prejudice may be sought for in his upbringing. To him Christianity meant the decadent Puritanism of the Derbyshire mining villages of his childhood; the religion of the "chapel people". He hated it:

> We detest the "chapel" and the Sunday school feeling which the Bible must necessarily impose on us. We want to get rid of all that *vulgarity*—for vulgarity it is.

On the other hand, like Middleton Murry, he had a great admiration for the mediaeval Catholic Church, which he described as

> a *human* thing, a complete, not a half-thing, adjusted to seed-time and harvest and the solstice of Christmas and of midsummer, and having a good balance, in early days, between brotherly love and natural lordship and splendour.

Murry is driven to deny the claims of the Catholic Church by his acceptance of the theory of automatic progress, by which the more recent must necessarily be the better. Lawrence denied the existence of progress; but he accepted the Protestant position that the early Church was unlike the mediaeval Catholic Church, and similar to Protestantism. That is why he hated the early Church. He speaks of "the individual frenzies of those early Christians, rather like the frenzies of chapel people and revivalists today".

Perhaps, if he had convinced himself that the mediaeval Church represented essential Christianity; and that Christ was not a Galilean dreamer with a destructive theory of universal love, but really "the Lord with the seven stars of the bear in his right hand"; then Lawrence might have been, with Chesterton and Eliot, a leader of the intelligentsia of the Right, and a force for good in England. As it is, his influence is a solvent of traditional things, and his thought an agent of destruction.

Education in Machine Utopia

C. K. Brown

"UTOPIA", Mr. Walter B. Pitkin informs us, "is in sight." In fact, we shall have reached it by 1975. Along with everything else in our present scheme of things, Education will have undergone a transformation. We shall no longer have to speak of our high schools as "the shame of our land", or of our liberal arts colleges as "the world's worst joke". The new Education will "be geared more accurately to the demands and ideals of real life; everybody will be trained to handle at least five or six jobs well and to use leisure advantageously and pleasantly".

Except in so far as this statement relates to six jobs rather than one, it is no more than the commonplace declaration of the objectives of Education which has been shouted from every platform for a generation, usually with the accompanying indictment that American Education has failed miserably to achieve these ends. American educators, by and large, have accepted the objectives as legitimate and have admitted the truth of the indictment. After each reiteration of their failures, they have redoubled their efforts and resolved anew to find those means of procedure and methods of organization through which they would at last be able to prepare men both to make a living and to live. But for very good reasons their success has become more and more meagre.

What is this "real life", for which Education must provide? Today it is a machine civilization, and neither Mr. Pitkin nor anyone else who admires it and who calls upon Education to save it, proposes for it to be anything different in the future. Indeed the machine is to usher in the Utopia.

If we are looking for real life, we might be able to observe that the machine method of production has rendered the business of making a living utterly distasteful, and that our distaste for it is responsible for our attempt to reduce the world's work to the status of a mere means existing for the furtherance of some end held to be desirable. This attempt destroys the unity of life. The five o'clock whistle divides human existence into two segments. On the one side lies work, dull and boring, to be endured as few hours as possible, an almost intolerable desert barren of anything that could satisfy the spirit of man: on the other side lie the Elysian fields of leisure, the gardens of the abundant life. As Science and Progress move forward our daily sojourn in the Sahara of toil becomes ever shorter—blessed relief, for the sands are blistering—but the gardens beyond become more spacious and their leafy lanes more enchanting. In these gardens we earnestly seek—only seek—the good life, and we imagine that nothing better could befall mankind than a progressive enlargement of the number of hours available for the search. All the while the breach widens between work and leisure, between the hours assigned to production and those assigned to enjoyment.

But life refuses to be departmentalized in any such fashion as this. Ends insist upon being consistent with their means. The life that exists beyond the bounds of the world's serious work must be of a piece with that which characterizes men as they go about making their daily bread. If the economic system crushes out the personality of man, if it gives his imagination no play and offers no outlet for his creative impulses, there can be no leisure afterward to restore his wounded spirit. What leisure men so mistreated can have is not leisure but idleness, a state of surfeited and aimless boredom. Art, music, literature, religious expression cannot rise above the level of the serious business of life. They find their roots there and they must express that or nothing.

It is true that a certain spurious culture may be attached to a social régime by borrowing from other peoples whose lives have been unified around principles capable of sustaining a high order of human expression, but the veneer is very thin and promptly blisters and cracks in contact with its incongruous host. Our Education has spent much of its time in fostering this spurious growth. Hence its failure. The machine age seeks to escape from the dullness of its world into the leisurely enjoyments of a riper and fuller life. But there is no escape. The unity of life will not be denied. If Education undertakes to become the ladder of escape, it sets for itself an impossible task. For Education is the cult of the ordered unity of life. It neither can nor should participate—as it has attempted to do—in any dismemberment of life's organic whole. Its task is to enable the human personality to come to terms with life, and life makes no piecemeal contracts with those who seek to know and grasp her.

If machine civilization is barren and ignoble during the hours when it exacts human servitude, it must inevitably be so in the hours that remain. There is no escape for the frustrated soul, for there is nothing to escape to. This is a conclusion from which we shrink, a conclusion that is unacceptable though necessary. For this reason we promise ourselves a soul-satisfying leisure, and, having no other power upon which to call, we call upon Education to lead us into this new Canaan. Education, because it too cannot endure the truth, accepts the challenge.

But the necessity of integrating the whole of life is inexorable. Our deep-seated conviction that a bearable life cannot be integrated around the machine method as a nucleus, instead of sending Education off on a vain search for a way of escape from the necessity, should have set it to hunting some principle about which an acceptable integration of life could be achieved. If this principle turns out to be inconsistent with some of our present arrangements for adding to the world's store of goods, Education need not be dismayed. It has no right to the name unless it follows its true pole-star—the oneness of life.

POETRY SUPPLEMENT

edited by

ALLEN TATE

Poetry: A Note in Ontology

JOHN CROWE RANSOM

A POETRY may be distinguished from a poetry by virtue of subject-matter, and subject-matter may be differentiated with respect to its ontology. An excellent variety of critical doctrine arises recently out of this differentiation, and thus criticism leans again upon ontological analysis for almost the first time since Kant. The recent critics remark in effect that some poetry deals with things, while some other poetry deals with ideas. The two poetries will differ from each other as radically as a thing differs from an idea.

The distinction in the hands of critics is a fruitful one. There is apt to go along with it a principle of valuation, which is the consequence of a temperament, and therefore basic. The critic likes things and intends that his poet shall offer them; or likes ideas and intends that he shall offer them; and approves him as he does the one or the other. Criticism cannot well go much further than this. The critic has carried to the last terms his analysis of the stuff of which poetry is made, and valued it frankly as his temperament or his need requires him to value it.

So philosophical a critic seems to be highly modern. He is; but this critic as a matter of fact is peculiarly on one side of the question. (The implication is unfavourable to the other side of the question.) He is in revolt against the tyranny of ideas, and against the poetry which celebrates ideas, and which may be identified—so far as his usual generalization may be trusted—with the hateful poetry of the Victorians. His bias is in favour of the things. On the other hand the critic who likes Victorian verse, or the poetry of ideas, has probably not thought of anything of so grand a simplicity as electing between the things and the ideas, being apparently not quite capable of the ontological perception. Therefore he does not know the real or constitutional ground of his liking, and may somewhat ingenuously claim that his predilection is for those poets who give him inspiration, or comfort, or truth, or honest metres, or something else equally "worth while". But Plato, who was not a modern, was just as clear as we are about the basic distinction between the ideas and the things, and yet stands far apart from the aforesaid conscious modern in passionately preferring the ideas over the things. The weight of Plato's testimony would certainly fall on the side of the Victorians, though they may scarcely have thought of calling him as their witness. But this consideration need not conclude the hearing.

I. Physical Poetry

The poetry which deals with things was much in favour a few years ago with a resolute body of critics. And the critics affected the poets. If necessary, they became the poets, and triumphantly illustrated the new mode. The Imagists were important figures in the history of our poetry, and they were both theorists and creators. It was their intention to present things in their thinginess, or *Dinge* in their *Dinglichkeit*; and to such an extent had the public lost its sense of *Dinglichkeit* that their re-direction was wholesome. What the public was inclined to seek in poetry was ideas, whether large ones or small ones, grand ones or pretty ones, certainly ideas to live by and die by, but what the Imagists identified with the stuff of poetry was, simply, things.

Their application of their own principle was sufficiently heroic, though they scarcely consented to be as extreme in the practice as in the theory. They had artistic talent, every one of the original group, and it was impossible that they should make of poetry so simple an exercise as in doctrine they seemed to think it was. Yet Miss Lowell wrote a poem on "Thompson's Lunch Room, Grand Central Station"; it is admirable if its intention is to show the whole reach of her courage. Its detail goes like this:

> Jagged greenwhite bowls of pressed glass
> Rearing snow-peaks of chipped sugar
> Above the lighthouse-shaped castors
> Of grey pepper and grey-white salt.

For most of us as for the public idealist, with his "values", this is inconsequential. Unhappily it seems that the things as things do not necessarily interest us, and that in fact we are not quite constructed with the capacity for a disinterested interest. But it must be noted even here that the things are on their good behaviour, looking rather well, and arranged by lines into something approaching a military formation. More technically, there is cross-imagery in the snow-peaks of sugar, and in the lighthouse-shaped castors, and cross-imagery contains the germ of a universal and is the beginning of ideation. The metre is but a vestige, but even so it means something, for metre is a powerful intellectual determinant marshalling the words and, inevitably, the things. The *Dinglichkeit* of this Imagist specimen, or the realism, was therefore not pure. But it was nearer pure than the world was used to in poetry, and the exhibit was astonishing.

For the purpose of this note I shall give to such poetry, dwelling as exclusively as it dares upon physical things, the name Physical Poetry. It is to stand opposite to that poetry which dwells as firmly as it dares upon ideas.

But perhaps thing versus idea does not seem to name an opposition precisely. Then we might phrase it a little differently: image versus idea. The idealistic philosophies are not sure that things exist, but they mean the equivalent when they refer to images. (Or they may consent to perceptions; or to impressions, following Hume, and following Croce, who remarks that they are pre-intellectual and independent of concepts. It is all the same.) It is sufficient if they concede that image is the raw material of idea. Though it may be an unwieldy and useless affair for the idealist as it stands, much needing to be licked into shape, nevertheless its relation to idea is that of a material cause, and it cannot be dispossessed of its priority.

It cannot be dispossessed of a primordial freshness, which idea can never claim. An idea is derivative and tamed. The image is in the natural or wild state, and it has to be discovered there, not put there, obeying its own law and none of ours. We think we can lay hold of image and take it captive, but the docile captive is not the real image but only the idea, which is the image with its character beaten out of it.

But we must be very careful: idealists are nothing if not dialectical. They object that an image in an original state of innocence is a delusion and cannot exist, that no image ever comes to us which does not imply the world of ideas, that there is "no percept without a concept". There is something in it. Every property discovered in the image is a universal property, and nothing discovered in the image is marvellous in kind though it may be pinned down historically or statistically as a single instance. But there is this to be understood too: the image which is not remarkable in any particular property is marvellous in its assemblage of many properties, a manifold of properties, like a mine or a field, something to be explored for the properties; yet science can manage the image, which is infinite in properties, only by equating it to the one property with which the science is concerned; for science at work is always *a science*, and committed to a special interest. It is not by refutation but by abstraction that science destroys the image. It means to get its "value" out of the image, and we may be sure that it has no use for the image in its original state of freedom. People who are engrossed with their pet "values" become habitual killers. Their game is the images, or the things, and they acquire the ability to shoot them as far off as they can be seen, and do. It is thus that we lose the power of imagination, or whatever faculty it is by which we are able to contemplate things as they are in their rich and contingent materiality. But our dreams reproach us, for in dreams they come alive again. Likewise our memory; which makes light of our science by recalling the images in their panoply of circumstance and with their morning freshness upon them.

It is the dream, the recollection, which compels us to poetry, and to deliberate aesthetic experience. It can hardly be argued, I think, that the arts are constituted automatically or *per se* out of original images, and arise in some early age of innocence. (Though Croce seems to support this view, and to make art a pre-adult stage of experience.) Art is based on second love, not first love. In it we make a return to something which we had wilfully alienated. The child is occupied mostly with things, but it is because he is still unfurnished with systematic ideas, not because he is a ripe citizen by nature and comes along already trailing clouds of glory. Images are clouds of glory for the man who has discovered that ideas are a sort of darkness. Imagism, that is the recent historical movement, may resemble a naïve poetry of mere things, but we can read the theoretical pronouncements of Imagists, and we can learn that Imagism is motivated by a distaste for the systematic abstractedness of thought. It presupposes acquaintance with science: that famous activity which is "constructive" with respect to the tools of our economic rôle in this world, and destructive with respect to nature. Imagists wish to escape from science by immersing themselves in images.

Not far off the simplicity of Imagism was, a little later, the subtler simplicity of Mr. George Moore's project, shared with several others, in behalf of "pure poetry". In Moore's house on Ebury Street they talked about poetry, with an after-dinner warmth if not an early-morning discretion, and their tastes agreed almost perfectly and reinforced one another. The fruit of these conversations was the volume *Pure*

Poetry. It must have been the most exclusive anthology of English poetry that had yet appeared, since its room was closed to all the poems that dallied visibly with ideas, so that many poems that had been coveted by all other anthologists do not appear there. Nevertheless the book is delicious, and something more deserves to be said for it.

First, that "pure poetry" is a kind of Physical Poetry. Its visible content is a thing-content. Technically, I suppose, it is effective in this character if it can exhibit its material in such a way that an image and not an idea must occupy the foreground of the reader's attention. Thus:

> Full fathom five thy father lies,
> Of his bones are coral made.

Here it is difficult for anybody (except the perfect idealist who is always theoretically possible and who would expect to take a return from anything whatever) to receive any experience except that of a very distinct image, or set of images. It has the configuration of image, which consists in being sharp of edges, and the modality of image, which consists in being given and non-negotiable, and the density, which consists in being full, a plenum of qualities. What is to be done with it? It is pure exhibit; it is to be contemplated; perhaps it is to be enjoyed. The art of poetry depends more frequently on this faculty than on any other in its repertory; the faculty of presenting images so whole and clean that they resist the catalysis of thought.

And something else must be said, going in the opposite direction. "Pure poetry", all the same, is not as pure as it is claimed to be, though on the whole it is Physical Poetry. (All true poetry is a phase of Physical Poetry.) It is not as pure as Imagism is, or at least it is not as pure as Imagism would be if it lived up to its principles; and in fact it is significant that the volume does not contain any Imagist poems, which argues a difference in taste somewhere. Imagism may take trifling things for its material, presumably it will take the first things the poet encounters, since "importance" and "interest" are not primary qualities which a thing possesses but secondary or tertiary ones which the idealist attributes to it by virtue of his own requirements. "Pure poetry" as Moore conceives it, and as the lyrics of Poe and Shakespeare offer it, deals with the more dramatic materials, and here dramatic means human, or at least capable of being referred to the critical set of human interests. Employing this sort of material the poet cannot exactly intend to set the human economists in us actually into motion, but perhaps he does intend to comfort us with the fleeting sense that it is potentially our kind of material.

In the same way "pure poetry" is nicely metred, whereas Imagism was free. Technique is written on it. And by the way the anthology contains no rugged anonymous Scottish ballad either, and probably for a like reason: because it would not be technically finished. Now both Moore and De La Mare are accomplished conservative artists, and what they do or what they approve may be of limited range but it is sure to be technically admirable, and it is certain that they understand what technique in poetry is though they do not define it. Technique takes the thing-content and metres and orders it. Metre is not an original property of things. It is artificial, and conveys the sense of human control, even if it does not wish to impair the thinginess of the things. Metre is a science, and so far as we attend to it we are within the scientific atmosphere. Order is the logical arrangement of the things. It involves the dramatic "form" which selects the things, and brings out their appropriate qualities, and carries them through a systematic course of predication until the total impression is a unit of logic and not merely a solid lump of thing-content. The "pure poems" which Moore admires are studied, though it would be fatal if they looked studious. A sustained effort of ideation effected these compositions. It is covered up, and communicates itself only on a subliminal plane of consciousness. But experienced readers are quite aware of it; they know at once what is the matter when they encounter a realism shamelessly passing for poetry, or a well-planned but blundering poetry.

As critics we should have every good will toward Physical Poetry: it is the basic constituent of any poetry. But the product is always something short of a pure or absolute existence, and it cannot quite be said that it consists of nothing but physical objects. The fact is that when we are more than usually satisfied with a Physical Poetry our analysis will probably disclose that it is more than usually impure.

II. Platonic Poetry

The poetry of ideas I shall denominate: Platonic Poetry. This also has grades of purity. A discourse which employed only abstract ideas with no images would be a scientific document and not a poem at all, not even a Platonic poem. Platonic Poetry dips heavily into the physical. If Physical Poetry tends to employ some ideation surreptitiously while still looking innocent of idea, Platonic Poetry more than returns the compliment, for it tries as hard as it can to look like Physical Poetry, as if it proposed to conceal its medicine, which is the idea to be propagated, within the sugar candy of objectivity and *Dinglichkeit.* As an instance, it is almost inevitable that I quote a famous Victorian utterance:

> The year's at the spring
> And day's at the morn;
> Morning's at seven;
> The hill-side's dew-pearled;
> The lark's on the wing;
> The snail's on the thorn:
> God's in his heaven—
> All's right with the world!

which is a piece of transparent homiletics; for in it six pretty, co-ordinate images are marched, like six little lambs to the slaughter, to a colon and a powerful text. Now the exhibits of this poetry in the physical kind are always large, and may take more of the attention of the reader than is desired, but they are meant mostly to be illustrative of the ideas. It is on this ground that idealists like Hegel detect something unworthy, like a pedagogical trick, in poetry after all, and consider that the race will abandon it when it has outgrown its childishness and is enlightened.

The ablest arraignment of Platonic Poetry that I have seen, as an exercise which is really science but masquerades as poetry by affecting a concern for physical objects, is that of Mr. Allen Tate in a series of studies recently in *The New Republic*. I will summarize. Platonic Poetry is allegory, a discourse in things, but on the understanding that they are translatable at every point into ideas. (The usual ideas are those which constitute the popular causes, patriotic, religious, moral, or social.) Or Platonic Poetry is the elaboration of ideas as such, but in proceeding introduces for ornament some physical properties after the style of Physical Poetry; which is rhetoric. It is positive when the poet believes in the efficacy of the ideas. It is negative when he despairs of their efficacy, because they have conspicuously failed to take care of him, and utters his personal wail:

> I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

This is "Romantic Irony", which comes at occasional periods to interrupt the march of scientific optimism. But it still falls under the category of Platonism; it generally proposes some other ideas to take the place of those which are in vogue.

But why Platonism? To define Platonism we must remember that it is not the property of the historical person who reports dialogues about it in an Academy, any more than "pure poetry" is the property of the talkers who describe it from a house on Ebury Street. Platonism, in the sense I mean, is the name of an impulse that is native to us all, frequent, tending to take a too complete possession of our minds. Why should the spirit of mortal be proud? The chief explanation is that modern mortal is probably a Platonist. We are led to believe that nature is rational and that by the force of reasoning we shall possess it. We read upon high authority: "Two great forces are persistent in Plato: the love of truth and zeal for human improvement." The forces are one force. We love to view the world under universal or scientific ideas to which we give the name of truth; and this is because the ideas seem to make not for righteousness but for mastery. The Platonic view of the world is ultimately the predatory, for it reduces to the scientific, which we know. The Platonic Idea becomes the Logos which science worships, which is the Occidental God, whose minions we are, and whose children, claiming a large share in his powers for patrimony.

Now the fine Platonic world of ideas fails to coincide with the original world of perception, which is the world populated by the stubborn and contingent objects, and to which as artists we fly in shame. The sensibility manifested by artists makes fools of scientists, if the latter are inclined to take their special and quite useful form of truth as the whole and comprehensive article. A dandified pagan worldling like Moore can always defeat Platonism; he does it every hour; he can exhibit the savour of his fish and wines, the fragrance of his coffee and cigars, and the solidity of the images in his favourite verse. These are objects which have to be experienced, and cannot be reported, for what is their simple essence that the Platonist can abstract? Moore may sound mystical but he is within the literal truth when he defends "pure poetry" on the ground that the things are constant, and it is the ideas which change—changing according to the latest mode under which the species indulges its grandiose expectation of subjugating nature. The things are constant in the sense that the ideas are never emancipated from the necessity of referring back to them as their original; and the sense that they are not altered nor diminished no matter which ideas may take off from them as a point of departure. The way to obtain the true *Dinglichkeit* of a formal dinner or a landscape or a beloved person is to approach the object as such, and in humility; then it unfolds a nature which we are unprepared for if we have put our trust in the simple idea which attempted to represent it.

The special antipathy of Moore is to the ideas as they put on their moral complexion, the ideas that relate everything to that insignificant centre of action, the human "soul" in its most Platonic and Pharisaic aspect. Nothing can darken perception better than a repetitive moral earnestness, based on the reputed superiority and higher destiny of the human species. If morality is the code by which we expect the race to achieve at last the more perfect possession of nature, it is an incitement to a more heroic science, but not to aesthetic experience, nor religious; if it is the code of humility, by which we intend to know nature as nature is, that is another matter; but in an age of science morality is inevitably for the general public the former; and so transcendent a morality as the latter is now unheard of. And therefore:

O love, *they* die in yon rich sky,
 They faint on hill or field or river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
 And grow forever and forever.

The italics are mine. These lines conclude an otherwise innocent poem, a candidate for the anthology, upon which Moore remarks: "The Victorian could never reconcile himself to finishing a poem without speaking about the soul, and the lines are particularly vindictive." Vindictive is just. By what right did the Laureate exult in the death of the physical echoes and call upon his love to witness it, but out of the imperiousness of his savage Platonism? Plato himself would have admired this ending, and considered that it redeemed an otherwise vicious poem.

Why do persons who have ideas to promulgate risk the trial by poetry? If the poets are hired to do it, which is the polite conception of some Hegelians, why do their employers think it worth the money, which they hold in public trust for the cause? Does a science have to become a poetry too? A science is the less effective as a science when it muddies its clear waters with irrelevance, a sermon becomes less cogent when it begins to quote the poets. The moralist, the scientist, and the prophet of idealism think evidently that they must establish their conclusions in poetry, though they reached these conclusions upon quite other evidence. The poetry is likely to destroy the conclusions with a sort of death by drowning, if it is a free poetry.

When that happens the Platonists may be cured of Platonism. There are probably two cures, of which this is the better. One cure is by adversity, by the failure of the ideas to work, on account of treachery or violence, or the contingencies of weather, constitution, love, and economics; leaving the Platonist defeated and bewildered, possibly humbled, but on the other hand possibly turned cynical and worthless. Very much preferable is the cure which comes by education in the fine arts, erasing his Platonism more gently, leading him to feel that that is not a becoming habit of mind which dulls the perceptions.

The definition which some Platonists have given to art is: the reference of the idea to the image. The implication is that the act is not for the purpose of honest comparison so much as for the purpose of proving the idea by the image. But in the event the idea is not disproved so much as it is made to look ineffective and therefore foolish. The ideas will not cover the objects upon which they are imposed, they are too attenuated and thread-like; for ideas have extension and objects have intension, but extension is thin while intension is thick.

There must be a great deal of genuine poetry which started in the poet's mind as a thesis to be developed, but in which the characters and the situations have developed faster than the thesis, and of their own accord. The thesis disappears; or it is recaptured here and there and at the end, and lodged sententiously with the reader, where every successive reading of the poem will dislodge it again. Like this must be some plays, even some play out of Shakespeare, whose thesis would probably be disentangled with difficulty out of the crowded pageant; or some narrative poem with a moral plot but much pure detail; perhaps some "occasional" piece by a Laureate or official person, whose purpose is compromised but whose personal integrity is saved by his wavering between the sentiment which is a public duty and the experience which he has in his own right; even some proclaimed allegory, like Spenser's, unlikely as that may seem, which does not remain transparent and everywhere translatable into idea but makes excursions into the territory of objectivity. These are hybrid performances. They cannot possess a beauty of design, and it is an accident if they possess beauty in detailed passages. But it is common enough, and we should be grateful. The mind is a versatile agent, and unexpectedly stubborn in its determination not really to be hardened in Platonism. Even in an age of science like the nineteenth century the poetic talents are not so loyal to its apostolic zeal as they and it suppose, and do not deserve the unqualified scorn which it is fashionable to offer them, now that the tide has turned, for their performance is qualified.

But this may be not stern enough for concluding a note on Platonic Poetry. I refer again to that whose Platonism is steady and malignant. This poetry is an imitation of Physical Poetry, and not really a poetry. Platonists practise their bogus poetry in order to show that an image will prove an idea, but the literature which succeeds in this delicate mission does not contain real images but illustrations.

III. Metaphysical Poetry

"Most men", Mr. Moore observes, "read and write poetry between fifteen and thirty and afterwards very seldom, for in youth we are attracted by ideas, and modern poetry being concerned almost exclusively with ideas we live on duty, liberty, and fraternity as chameleons are said to live on light and air, till at last we turn from ideas to things, thinking that we have lost our taste for poetry, unless, perchance, we are classical scholars."

Much is conveyed in this characteristic sentence, even in proportion to its length. As for the indicated chronology, the cart is put after the horse, which is its proper sequence. And it is pleasant to be confirmed in the belief that many men do recant from their Platonism and turn back to things. But it cannot be exactly a *volte face*, for there are qualifications. If pure ideas were what these men turn from, they would have had no poetry at all in the first period, and if pure things were what they turn to, they would be having not a classical poetry but a pure imagism, if such a thing is possible, in the second.

The mind does not come unscathed and virginal out of Platonism. Ontological interest would have to develop curiously, or wastefully and discontinuously, if men through their youth must cultivate the ideas so passionately that upon its expiration they are done with ideas forever and ready to become as little (and pre-logical) children. Because of the foolishness of idealists are ideas to be taboo for the adult mind? And, as critics, what are we to do with those poems (like *The Canonization* and *Lycidas*) which could not obtain admission by Moore into the anthology but which very likely are the poems we cherish beyond others?

The reputed "innocence" of the aesthetic moment, the "knowledge without desire" which Schopenhauer praises, must submit to a little scrutiny, like anything else that looks too good to be true. We come into this world as aliens come into a land which they must conquer if they are to live. For native endowment we have an exacting "biological" constitution which knows precisely what it needs and determines for us our inevitable desires. There can be no certainty that any other impulses are there, for why should they be? They scarcely belong in the biological picture. Perhaps we are simply an efficient animal species, running smoothly, working fast, finding the formula of life only too easy, and after a certain apprenticeship piling up power and wealth far beyond the capacity of our appetites to use. What will come next? Perhaps poetry, if the gigantic effort of science begins to seem disproportionate to the reward, according to a sense of diminishing returns. But before this pretty event can come to pass, it is possible that every act of attention which is allowed us is conditioned by a gross and selfish interest.

Where is innocence then? The aesthetic moment appears as a curious moment of suspension; between the Platonism in us, which is militant, always sciencing and devouring, and a starved inhibited aspiration towards innocence which, if it could only be free, would like to respect and know the object as it might of its own accord reveal itself.

The poetic impulse is not free, yet it holds out stubbornly against science for the enjoyment of its images. It means to reconstitute the world of perceptions. Finally there is suggested some such formula as the following:

Science gratifies a rational or practical impulse and exhibits the minimum of perception. Art gratifies a perceptual impulse and exhibits the minimum of reason.

Now it would be strange if poets did not develop many technical devices for the sake of increasing the volume of the percipienda or sensibilia. I will name some of them.

First Device: metre. Metre is the most obvious device. A formal metre impresses us as a way of regulating very drastically the material, and we do not stop to remark (that is, as readers) that it has no particular aim except some nominal sort of regimentation. It symbolizes the predatory method, like a sawmill which intends to reduce all the trees to fixed unit timbers, and as business men we require some sign of our business. But to the Platonic censor in us it gives a false security, for so long as the poet appears to be working faithfully at his metrical engine he is left comparatively free to attend lovingly to the things that are being metred, and metring them need not really hurt them. Metre is the gentlest violence he can do them, if he is expected to do some violence.

Second Device: fiction. The device of the fiction is probably no less important and universal in poetry. Over every poem which looks like a poem is a sign which reads: This road does not go through to action; fictitious. Art always sets out to create an "aesthetic distance" between the object and the subject, and art takes pains to announce that it is not history. The situation treated is not quite an actual situation, for science is likely to have claimed that field, and exiled art; but a fictive or hypothetical one, so that science is less greedy and perception may take hold of it. Kant asserted that the aesthetic judgement is not concerned with the existence or non-existence of the object, and may be interpreted as asserting that it is so far from depending on the object's existence that it really depends on the object's non-existence. Sometimes we have a certain melancholy experience.

We enjoy a scene which we receive by report only, or dream, or meet with in art; but subsequently find ourselves in the presence of an actual one that seems the very same scene; only to discover that we have not now the power to enjoy it, or receive it aesthetically, because the economic tension is upon us and will not indulge us in the proper mood. And it is generally easier to obtain our aesthetic experience from art than from nature, because nature is actual, and communication is forbidden. But in being called fictive or hypothetical the art-object suffers no disparagement. It cannot be true in the sense of being actual, and therefore it may be despised by science. But it is true in the sense of being fair or representative, in permitting the "illusion of reality"; just as Schopenhauer discovered that music may symbolize all the modes of existence in the world; and in keeping with the customary demand of the readers of fiction proper, that it shall be "true to life". The defenders of art must require for it from its practitioners this sort of truth, and must assert of it before the world this dignity. If jealous science succeeds in keeping the field of history for its own exclusive use, it does not therefore annihilate the arts, for they reappear in a field which may be called real though one degree removed from actuality. There the arts perform their function with much less interference, and at the same time with about as much fidelity to the phenomenal world as history has.

Third Device: tropes. I have named two important devices; I am not prepared to offer the exhaustive list. I mention but one other kind, the device which comprises the figures of speech. A proper scientific discourse has no intention of employing figurative language for its definitive sort of utterance. Figures of speech twist accidence away from the straight course, as if to intimate astonishing lapses of rationality beneath the smooth surface of discourse, inviting perceptual attention, and weakening the tyranny of science over the senses. But I skip the several easier and earlier figures, which are timid, and stop on the climactic figure, which is the metaphor; with special reference to its consequence, a poetry which once in our history it produced in a beautiful and abundant exhibit, called Metaphysical Poetry.

And what is Metaphysical Poetry? The term was added to the official vocabulary of criticism by Johnson, who probably took it from Pope, who probably took it from Dryden, who used it to describe the poetry of a certain school of poets, thus: "He [John Donne] affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign. . . . In this Mr. Cowley has copied him to a fault." But the meaning of metaphysical which was common in Dryden's time, having come down from the Middle Ages through Shakespeare, was simply: supernatural; *miraculous*. The context of the Dryden passage indicates it.

Dryden, then, noted a miraculism in poetry and repudiated it; except where it was employed for satire, where it was not seriously intended and had the effect of wit. Dryden himself employs miraculism in satires, but elsewhere he seems increasingly to avoid it if he will be committed by it; he may employ it in his translations of Ovid, where the responsibility is Ovid's and not Dryden's, and in an occasional classical piece where he is making polite use of myths well known to be pagan errors. In his "amorous" pieces he finds the reign of nature sufficient, and it is often the worse for his amorous pieces. He is on the whole a naturalist. (A naturalist is a person who studies nature not because he loves it but because he wants to use it, approaches it from the standpoint of common sense, and sees it thin and not thick.) Dryden might have remarked that Donne himself had a change of heart and confined his miraculism at last to the privileged field of a more or less scriptural revelation. Perhaps Dryden found his way to accepting Milton because Milton's miraculism was mostly not a contemporary sort but classical and scriptural, pitched in a time when the age of miracles had not given way to the age of science. He knew too that Cowley had shamefully recanted from his petty miraculism, which formed the conceits, and turned to the scriptural or large order of miraculism to write his heroic (but empty) verses about David; and had written a Pindaric ode in extravagant praise of "Mr. Hobs", whose naturalistic account of nature seemed to render any other account fantastic if not contrary to the social welfare.

Incidentally, it is certain that Mr. Hobbes affected Dryden too, and the whole of Restoration literature. What Bacon with his disparagement of poetry had begun, in the cause of science and protestantism, Hobbes completed. The name of Hobbes is critical in any history that would account for the chill which settled upon the poets at the very moment that English poetry was attaining magnificently to the fullness of its powers. The name stood for common sense and naturalism, and the monopoly of the scientific spirit over the mind. Hobbes was the adversary, the Satan, when the latter first intimidated the English poets. After Hobbes his name is legion.

"Metaphysics", or miraculism, informs a poetry which is the most original and exciting, and intellectually perhaps the most seasoned, that we know in our literature, and very probably it has no equivalent in other literatures. But it is evident that the metaphysical effects may be large-scale or they may be small-scale. (I believe that generically, or ontologically, no distinction is to be made between them.) Shakespeare illustrates everything at one time or another and is therefore not the clear-cut example to cite. If Donne and Cowley illustrate the small-scale effects, Milton will illustrate the large-scale ones, probably as a consequence of the fact that he wrote major poems. Milton, in the *Paradise Lost*, told a story which was heroic and miraculous in the first place. In telling it he dramatized it, and allowed the scenes and characters to develop of their own native energy. The virtue of a long poem on a "metaphysical" subject will consist in the dramatization or substantiation of all the parts, the poet not being required to devise fresh miracles on every page so much as to establish the perfect "naturalism" of the material upon which the grand miracle is imposed. The *Paradise Lost* possesses this virtue nearly everywhere:

Thus *Adam* to himself lamented loud
Through the still Night, not now, as ere man fell,
Wholsom and cool, and mild, but with black Air
Accompanied, with damps and dreadful gloom,
Which to his evil Conscience represented

All things with double terror: On the ground
Outstretcht he lay, on the cold ground, and oft
Curs'd his Creation, Death as oft accus'd
Of tardie execution, since denounc't
The day of his offence. Why comes not Death,
Said hee, with one thrice acceptable stroke
To end me?

This is exactly the sort of detail for a large-scale metaphysical work, but it would hardly serve the purpose with a slighter and more naturalistic subject; with "amorous" verses. For the critical mind Metaphysical Poetry refers perhaps almost entirely to the so-called "conceits" that constitute its staple. To define the conceit is to define small-scale Metaphysical Poetry.

It is easily defined, upon a little citation. Donne exhibits two conceits, or two branches of one conceit, in the familiar lines:

Our hands were firmly cemented
By a fast balm which thence did spring;
Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
Our eyes upon one double string.

The poem which follows sticks to the topic; it represents the lovers in precisely that mode of union and no other. Cowley is more conventional yet still bold in the lines:

Oh take my Heart, and by that means you'll prove
  Within, too stor'd enough of love:
Give me but yours, I'll by that change so thrive
  That Love in all my parts shall live.
So powerful is this my change, it render can,
My outside Woman, and your inside Man.

A conceit originates in a metaphor; and in fact the conceit is but a metaphor if the metaphor is meant; that is, if it is developed so literally that it must be meant, or predicated so badly that nothing else can be meant. Perhaps this will do for a definition.

Clearly the seventeenth century had the courage of its metaphors, and imposed them imperially on the nearest things, and just as clearly the nineteenth century lacked this courage, and was half-heartedly metaphorical, or content with similes. The difference between the literary qualities of the two periods is the difference between the metaphor and the simile. (It must be admitted that this like other generalizations will not hold without its exceptions.) One period was pithy and original in its poetic utterance, the other was prolix and predictable. It would not quite commit itself to the metaphor even if it came upon one. Shelley is about as vigorous as usual when he says in *Adonais*:

Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour. . . .

But splendour is not the correlative of dew, it has the flat tone of a Platonic idea, while physically it scarcely means more than dew with the sunshine upon it. The seventeenth century would have said: "Turn thy dew, which is water, into fire, and accomplish the transmutation of the elements." Tennyson in his boldest lyric sings:

Come into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, has flown,

and leaves us unpersuaded of the bat. The predication would be complete without the bat, "The black night has flown", and a flying night is not very remarkable. Donne is less guarded when he says to the lovers: "You whom reverend love/Made one another's hermitage." Tennyson is only affecting a metaphor. But later in the same poem he writes:

> The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near;"
>   And the white rose weeps, "She is late;"
> The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear;"
>   And the lily whispers, "I wait."

And this is a technical conceit. But it is too complicated for this author, having a plurality of images which do not sustain themselves individually. The flowers stand for the lover's thoughts, and have been prepared for carefully in an earlier stanza, but their distinctness is too arbitrary, and these are like a schoolgirl's made-up metaphors. The passage will not compare with one on a very similar situation in *Green Candles*, by Mr. Humbert Wolfe:

> "I know her little foot," grey carpet said:
> "Who but I should know her light tread?"
> "She shall come in," answered the open door,
> "And not," said the room, "go out any more."

Wolfe's conceit works and Tennyson's does not, and though Wolfe's performance seems not very daring or important, he employs the technique of the conceit correctly: he knows that the miracle must have a basis of verisimilitude.

Such is Metaphysical Poetry; the extension of a rhetorical device; as one of the most brilliant successes in our poetry, entitled to long and thorough examination; and even here demanding somewhat by way of a more ontological criticism. I conclude with it.

We may consult the dictionary, and discover that there is a miraculism or supernaturalism in a metaphorical assertion if we are ready to mean what we say, or believe what we hear. Or we may read Mr. Hobbes, the naturalist, who was very clear upon it: "II. The second cause of absurd assertions I ascribe to the giving of names of 'bodies' to 'accidents', or of 'accidents' to 'bodies', as they do that say 'faith is infused' or 'inspired', when nothing can be 'poured' or 'breathed' into anything but body . . . and that 'phantasms' are 'spirits', etc." Translated into our present terms, Hobbes is condemning the confusion of single qualities with whole things; or the substitution of concrete images for simple ideas.

Specifically, the miraculism arises when the poet discovers by analogy an identity between objects which is partial, though it should be considerable, and proceeds to an identification which is complete. It is to be contrasted with the smile, which says "as if" or "like", and is scrupulous to keep the identification partial. In Cowley's passage above, the lover is saying, not for the first time in this literature: "She and I have exchanged our hearts." What has actually been exchanged is affections, and affections are only in a limited sense the same as hearts. Hearts are unlike affections in being engines that pump blood and form body; and it is a miracle if the poet represents the lady's affection as rendering his outside into woman and his affection as rendering her inside into man. But he succeeds, with this mixture, in depositing with us the image of a very powerful affection.

From the strict point of view of literary criticism it must be insisted that the miraculism which produces the humblest conceit is the same miraculism which supplies to religions their substantive content. (This is said to assert the dignity not of the conceits but of the religions.) It is the poet and nobody else who gives to the God a nature, a form, faculties, and a history; to the God, most comprehensive of all terms, which, if there were no poetic impulse to actualize or "find" him, would remain the driest and deadest among Platonic ideas, with all intension sacrificed to infinite extension. The myths are conceits, born of metaphors. Religions are periodically produced by poets and destroyed by naturalists. Religion depends for its ontological validity upon a literary understanding, and that is why it is frequently misunderstood. The metaphysical poets, perhaps like their spiritual fathers the mediaeval Schoolmen, were under no illusions about this. They recognized myth, as they recognized the conceits, as a device of expression; its sanctity as the consequence of its public or social importance.

But whether the topics be God's or amorous experiences, why do poets resort to miraculism? Hardly for the purpose of controverting natural fact or scientific theory. Religion pronounces about God only where science is silent and philosophy is negative; for a positive is wanted, that is, a God who has his being in the physical world as well as in the world of principles and abstractions. Likewise with the little secular enterprises of poetry too. Not now are the poets so brave, not for a very long time have they been so brave, as to dispute the scientists on what they call their "truth"; though it is a pity that the statement cannot be turned round. Poets will concede that every act of science is legitimate, and has its efficacy. The metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century particularly admired the methodology of science, and in fact they copied it, and their phrasing is often technical, spare, and polysyllabic, though they are not repeating actual science but making those metaphorical substitutions that are so arresting.

The intention of Metaphysical Poetry is to complement science, and improve discourse. Naturalistic discourse is incomplete, for either of two reasons. It has the minimum of physical content and starves the sensibility; or it has the maximum, as if to avoid the appearance of evil, but is laborious and pointless. Platonic Poetry is too idealistic, but Physical Poetry is too realistic, and realism is tedious and does not maintain interest. The poets therefore introduce the psychological device of the miracle. The predication which it permits is clean and quick but it is not a scientific predication. For scientific predication concludes an act of attention but miraculism initiates one. It leaves us looking, marvelling, and revelling in the thick *dinglich* substance that has just received its strange representation.

Let me suggest as a last word, in deference to a common Puritan scruple, that the predication of Metaphysical Poetry is true enough. It is not true like history, but no poetry and only a part of science is true in that sense. It is true in the pragmatic sense in which some of the generalizations of science are true: it accomplishes precisely the sort of representation that it means to. It suggests to us that the object is perceptually or physically remarkable, and we had better attend to it.

A Note on Symbol and Conceit

CLEANTH BROOKS

T. S. ELIOT has found a similarity between some of the French symbolist poets and the English metaphysicals. This similarity has been commented upon and illustrated by Edmund Wilson in his valuable *Axel's Castle*. The resemblance is evident; but Wilson has a special theory about symbolism, that it is "a second flood" of the tide of romanticism, an anti-scientific movement. Unless we are very careful, it is possible that we shall come to regard metaphysical poetry as possessing anti-scientific traits also.

Edmund Wilson has taken care to show that there are two branches of symbolism, the "serious-aesthetic" and the "conversational-ironic" (Jules Laforgue and Tristan Corbière). It is from the latter, of course, that Eliot derives. But having made this division, Wilson does not seem to me to maintain it sufficiently, and consequently the romantic traits of the serious-aesthetic tradition are attributed to symbolism in general. Eliot, for example, is clearly connected by Wilson with romantic escapism.

This corresponds to the attempt of another recent critic writing in *The Modern Monthly* to convict him of decadent romanticism as follows:

> So he can delude himself into fancying that his literary masters, the French Symbolists and the later Elizabethans, are in some way connected with classicism, instead of their being, as they clearly are, along with Mr. Eliot himself, the supreme instances of decadent romanticism.

As this comment indicates, there is also the danger that labels affixed in one-volume histories of English literature—the later Elizabethans as "instances of decadent romanticism"—may contribute to the confusion. It is important, therefore, to inquire just what the relation of symbolism to metaphysical poetry is; and, furthermore, to examine more closely the charge that metaphysical poetry is itself romantic and escapist.

The symbolist poets are almost as badly named, from a modern point of view, as the metaphysicals. We must dismiss any idea which would connect symbolism with an elaborate system of "symbols" in the nature of allegory, just as we must dismiss from the seventeenth-century poets any necessary connection with metaphysics.

It will be necessary to follow rather closely Wilson's account of the beginnings of symbolism in France in order to make a fair criticism of his position. After pointing out Poe's influence on the French symbolists, and after quoting Poe's statement "that indefiniteness is an element of the true music [of poetry] . . . a suggestive indefiniteness of vague and therefore spiritual *effect*", Wilson observes that "to approximate the indefiniteness of music was to become one of the principal aims of Symbolism".

Now this predilection for the vague and indefinite is romantic, and is hostile on principle to the genius of metaphysical poetry. Wordsworth, one remembers, stated that the imagination "recoils from everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite". But the next characteristic of symbolism which Wilson mentions is of a very different nature, and is a characteristic which it shares with metaphysical poetry.

> This effect of indefiniteness [he continues] was produced not merely by the confusion I have mentioned between the imaginary world and the real; but also by means of a further confusion between the perceptions of the different senses.
>
> *Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent . . .*
> *Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent. . . .*
>
> wrote Baudelaire. And we find Poe, in one of his poems, *hearing* the approach of darkness.

Now this confusion "between the perceptions of the different senses" is susceptible of a quite different account. It was never a characteristic of the romantic poets. It represents a movement in the direction of metaphysical poetry. For example, Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* reprimands as a "species of *wit*, a pure work of the *will*" such "rhetorical caprices" as that of making, for example, hills "reflect the image of a *voice*".* Although Poe's juxtapositions would hardly have offended Coleridge so violently, they are of the same nature.

Wilson continues:

> This notation of super-rational sensations was a novelty in the forties of the last century—as was the dreamlike, irrational musical poetry of "Annabel Lee" and "Ulalume"; and they helped to effect a revolution in France.

One pauses here to comment: What other sorts of sensations are there? Surely, there are no *rational* sensations. The notation of sensations is always of irrational sensations. The matter of importance is not the increased irrationality of the sensations, but of the subtlety which the notation sets out to attain. So long as the notation is to be shallow and crude, the language may very well be what Wilson has termed "the conventional and universal language of ordinary literature".

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* See "Three Types of Poetry", essay III, by Allen Tate (*The New Republic*, April 11, 1934), for a discussion of the romantic will in this kind of imagery.

Wilson goes on to observe that

> for an English-speaking reader of today, Poe's influence may be hard to understand; and even when such a reader comes to examine the productions of French Symbolism, it may surprise him that they should have caused amazement. The medley of images; the deliberately mixed metaphors; the combination of passion and wit—of the grand and the prosaic manners; the bold amalgamation of material with spiritual—all these may seem to him quite proper and familiar. He has always known them in the English poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—Shakespeare and the other Elizabethans did all these things without theorizing about them. Is this not the natural language of poetry? Is it not the norm against which, in English literature, the eighteenth century was a heresy and to which the Romantics did their best to return?

Except for the last sentence one can readily agree, though one may question whether the average "English-speaking reader of today" would consider this the natural language of poetry. Certainly it is a view of poetry against which the eighteenth century was a heresy. But did the Romantic poets do their best to return to it? One must answer: to some of its traits, yes, but toned down; and to some not at all. In particular, the Romantics were careful not to mix their metaphors too much, and not to be too bold in their "amalgamation of material with spiritual"; as for the "combination of passion and wit—of the grand and the prosaic manners" we shall find very little indeed.

Such figures as Eliot's

> Midnight shakes the memory
> As a madman shakes a dead geranium

or Hart Crane's

> Yet, to the empty trapeze of your flesh,
> O Magdalene, each comes back to die alone

are simply not to be found in the poetry of the early nineteenth century. Eliot and other recent critics are quite right in observing that the poetry of the Romantic Revolt is not a poetry of wit. The presence of wit, as a matter of fact, would destroy a great deal of the "romantic" quality, and in so far as the symbolists have succeeded in bringing wit into their poetry, they have precluded the charges of escapism, sentimentality, and the other pejorative associations of "romantic".

Wilson draws nearer to his final definition of symbolism by stating that "to intimate things rather than state them plainly was thus one of the primary aims of the Symbolists". This, taken with his statement that "the symbols of the Symbolist school are usually chosen arbitrarily by the poet to stand for special ideas of his own—they are a sort of disguise for these ideas", may give the impression that the poet is striving to baffle the reader. And, indeed, there is some warrant for this assumption in the statements made by the symbolists themselves. But one must remember the special material with which the poet works. As I. A. Richards has pointed out: "Most descriptions of feelings, and nearly all subtle descriptions, are metaphorical. . . ." The symbolists were concerned not with putting concepts into a formal and decorated verse but with communicating states of feeling. The subtlety and even the far-fetched character of their figurative language are thus analogous to that of the metaphysical poets, and for the same reasons.

It is possible also to restate Wilson's final definition of symbolism in language far less prejudicial and more accurate. "Symbolism", Wilson states, "may be defined as an attempt by carefully studied means—a complicated association of ideas represented by a medley of metaphors—to communicate unique personal feelings." The phraseology implies that the symbolist poet is deliberately trying to exclude the mass of people from participation in his poetry—a view of the matter which Max Eastman emphasizes in his account of the symbolist poets as members of a "Cult of Unintelligibility". But a more accurate statement would be: *to communicate feelings with such subtlety and detail as to preserve all their shades and nuances.* Such an attempt will undoubtedly result in a limitation of the audience, but the limitation will be an unfortunate necessity conditioned by the nature of the poetry, not the effect of the poet's personal snobbery.

In general, Wilson's attempt to connect classicism with science, opposing to these the "poetic-romantic", is gratuitous and confusing. There is nothing inherently romantic in unscientific poetry just as there is nothing inherently scientific in classical poetry. And we must not allow ourselves to be confused by the critical terminology of the "Age of Reason". The so-called "reason" of eighteenth-century poetry is no more rational than any other code of conventions is rational. The lack of simple transmission of thought perhaps makes symbolist poetry stand apart from simple expository prose (though exposition is not always scientific). But, on the other hand, if one is to raise at all the issue of likeness to science, one may observe that the detachment, the lack of propagandist intent, the fidelity to the subject in hand—these traits place symbolist poetry far closer to the spirit of science than much other poetry.

The symbolist poets, then, are akin to the metaphysicals in the subtlety of their descriptions of feelings, and in the subsequent limitation of their audience. With the conversational-ironic branch, the approach to metaphysical poetry becomes much closer. The serious-aesthetic tradition, as the name implies, had held somewhat to traditionally poetic subject-matter and poetic diction, increasing the subtlety but hardly going so far as to develop apparent discords. Laforgue and Corbière, on the other hand, broke radically with the traditional concepts of the poetic. They attempted to integrate all sorts of materials, and accordingly we find in their work the recurrence of all the various phenomena of metaphysical poetry: verbal conceits such as Corbière's "*O Venus dans ta venerie!*"; violent comparisons such as that which makes the rain the soup of the dogs in heaven; and the play of wit such as

Prends pitié de la fille-mère,
Du petit au bord du chemin. . . .

Si quelqu'un leur jette la pierre,
Que la pierre se change en pain.

With the acquisition of these qualities—irony, realistic diction, wit, the ability to fuse heterogeneous materials and to synthesize opposed impulses—symbolist poetry coalesces with metaphysical. The faults to be censured may be many: lack of taste, strained images, et cetera. What it is important to observe, however, is that they will not be the faults characteristic of romanticism: sentimentality, vulnerability to irony, and esçapism.

The function of the conceit, so constantly a feature of metaphysical poetry, has often been misconceived. It amounts to much more than an extension of the conventions of the poetic. Eliot is not merely wilfully perverse when he writes

The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

The conceit is an instrument of precision by which the poet is enabled to express the most elusive states of feelings. More important still, it is an instrument of stabilization by means of which the poet brings the counter-impulses into momentary conflict with the primary impulses, and then resolves the conflict. Wit in this sense may be defined, therefore, as an awareness of all the alternatives which a given situation offers. When successful, the effect of the conceit is to make the poetry not only subtle but tough.

It is one of our contemporary ironies that our modern poetry of wit should have been labelled by some critics "escapist". It is possible, of course, to prove that certain modern poets are inhabitants of the

Ivory Tower by measuring the size of the reading public which appreciates them. Surely a fairer test, however, would be to measure the scope and breadth of experience which their poetry assimilates. And if we apply this test to both poets and reading public, we shall come to a strange and perhaps illuminating conclusion: that it is the public which inhabits the Ivory Tower, separating its emotional life—at least that which it wishes to contemplate in poetry—from the actual world, and most of all from its intellectual activities; and that the poetry it appreciates presents certain conventional emotions uncontaminated by the actual world and untroubled by the play of the mind.

The development of William Butler Yeats will furnish in itself an excellent illustration of the relation of symbolist to metaphysical poetry; for if Yeats's early poetry is in the serious-aesthetic tradition of symbolism, his later, and better, poetry approaches the conversational-ironic—and approaching it, comes closer to the school of Donne. The mistiness, the Celtic twilight, have cleared away, and there is, though with no loss of subtlety, an increased hardness and wit. These qualities are to be found, for example, in one of his finest later poems, "Sailing to Byzantium".

If we follow the poem carefully, we shall be able to detect even some of the syllogistic reasoning which characterizes so much of metaphysical poetry. The poet reasons as follows: His own country is a land of natural beauty, beauty of the body. But his own body is old. The soul must, therefore, sing the louder to compensate for the old and dying flesh.

> An aged man is but a paltry thing,
> A tattered coat upon a stick, unless

Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress.

But there is no singing school for the soul except in studying the works of the soul. "And therefore" he has sailed to Byzantium, for the artists of Byzantium do not follow the forms of nature but intellectual forms, ideal patterns. He appears to them to

Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal

and by severing him from the dying world of the body, to gather him into what is at least "the artifice of eternity".

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

A comparison of this clumsy paraphrase with the poem in its entirety illustrates better than anything else why the poet must write as he does—how much we lose by substituting concepts for his richer "symbols". Byzantium is, for instance, a very rich symbol. It may be thought a very indefinite one. But richness and complexity are not vagueness, and it will be easy to show that the symbol has its precision. It means many things, but if one misses the connection with intellectual art, one has missed the poem. The whole poem demands, as do the poems of Donne and Marvell, mental agility on the part of the reader.

The images, for the most part, are not especially unpoetic. The "gentle reader" will balk not so much at the images as at the amount of intellectual exercise demanded of him. And yet one observes that the poet has the soul perform in a more unconventional manner ("clap hands and sing") than most Victorians would have permitted; and that Yeats has brought a scarecrow and the "lords and ladies of Byzantium" into close and successful fusion. There is irony and wit–serious wit–in a phrase like "the artifice of eternity". Indeed, the fantasy and extravagance of the poem would cause one to call it, in Wordsworth's terms, a poem of the fancy as opposed to the imagination, except that it has a tragic seriousness which has nothing to do with the playful fancy of Wordsworth. And this is perhaps the surest mark of all that here we have a case of symbolist poetry becoming metaphysical.

We are not surprised that a poem intellectual in structure should have as its theme the departure of a great poet from sensual art to intellectual.

> Once out of nature I shall never take
> My bodily form from any natural thing.

One remembers Dr. Johnson's remark made some hundred and fifty years earlier that the metaphysical poets "did not copy nature, neither painted the forms of matter", et cetera. The two statements, one feels, have a not altogether accidental relationship, and it is not over-literal, perhaps, to interpret the voyage to Byzantium as one which has carried the poet, if not over to the metaphysicals, at least very close to them.

Twelve Poets

ROBERT PENN WARREN

Poems, 1924-1933 by Archibald MacLeish (Houghton Mifflin)
A Green Bough by William Faulkner (Smith & Haas)
Now With His Love by John Peale Bishop (Scribner's)
A Tale of Troy by John Masefield (Macmillan)
The Fleeting and Other Poems by Walter De La Mare (Knopf)
Collected Poems by Robert Hillyer (Knopf)
Nicodemus by Edwin Arlington Robinson (Macmillan)
Talifer by Edwin Arlington Robinson (Macmillan)
Give Your Heart to the Hawks by Robinson Jeffers (Random House)
Poems (Second Edition with New Poems) by W. H. Auden (Faber & Faber)
The Orators by W. H. Auden (Faber & Faber)
Poems by Stephen Spender (Faber & Faber)
Spring Encounter by John Pudney (Methuen)

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH has here selected for publication those poems which he can "now reread without embarrassment". His poetic career of some ten years has been fruitful in performance and reputation; and it does not seem too early for what, the author's preface to the contrary, approximates a "collected edition".

There is a great similarity between MacLeish's early and late work. He has extended his technical resources, but not as far as might have been predicted from one whose first published work showed such facility; and he has written a poem, "Conquistador", on more ambitious scale than any that preceded it. But his poetry, from first to last, shows the same kind of excellence, though in differing degree, and the same limitation.

From first to last there has been a certain imprecision of theme in MacLeish's poetry. Despite an increasing flexibility in technique, this imprecision has persisted from the early lyrics through "Conquistador". Most of the lyrics present mere mood, a nostalgia, a melancholy, a weariness, a fatalism, which poetically is realized only in a series of appropriate images drawn from the processes of nature, the wind, the movement of water, the wax and wane of the moon. The poet is sensitive to these things and records the stimuli that have affected him, but he has exhibited little power to dominate them, to organize them as communication for anything more than the simple mood. The formula for most of the lyrics is a deft catalogue of these stimuli in conjunction with the single question, the single, almost inarticulate, cry: *Remember. Why should I weep for this? I remember the past time. Where shall we sleep, O night-bewildered birds? Why do you listen, trees? A stir, a sigh. What is it we cannot recall?* Rhetorical tags such as these appear as an almost constant mannerism for the conclusion of his verses: they are in incantation for the undigested mystery.

It is by the ejaculation, the question, frequently not substantiated in the context and circumstance which the poet has presented in his catalogue of physical nature or scarcely related event, that he attempts to give dramatic focus to the material, to define the theme itself. MacLeish is generally the artist of the simple, broad, uncontradictory effect. His poetry is a study in shading, not a study in resolution. In fact, his poetry is carefully purged of all opposing stresses; it is singularly undramatic. It is poetry of the single impulse, which requires no resolution. This implies a certain formlessness, a defect in logic. If the theme is vague (not *difficult*), there can be no suspense or progression; there can be little more than the incidental excitement of the poetic perceptions, at creating which MacLeish is adept. He accumulates a set of images and statements which provide this incidental excitement (in any given poem an excitement of precisely the same unmixed order from image to image or statement to statement), but without any considerable architectural capacity. For practical example, let the reader try the experiment of shifting the order of a fair number of lines or stanzas, excepting the last in each instance, of the following pieces: "Cinema of a Man", "Le Secret Humain", "Memory Green", "Broken Promise", "Before March", "Salute", "Cook County", "Way Station", "Land's End", "Reproach to Dead Poets", "Epistle To Be Left in the Earth", or "American Letter". I do not mean to imply that these are bad poems, for they are successful in different degrees; but I do believe that even violent derangements of order will not greatly jeopardize the kind of success they possess. This may indicate why their effect is usually diffuse, vague, and general; and why Mac-

Leish's work, if it is to be thoroughly enjoyed, must be approached in a very special temper. It engages the reader's capacity on one plane only.

MacLeish's more ambitious pieces are probably the most instructive examples of his weakness in construction. The "Hamlet" depends almost absolutely on the Shakespearean reference for any sense of progression or organization; it is, finally, a sort of versified marginalia, a commentary, brilliantly executed at times, which interprets the play as a special symbol. But the commentary breaks down precisely at the point where, for the purpose in hand, it should be most effective: the second half of section 13, and section 14. And it is in those parts that the poem loses contact with the play, and becomes more purely MacLeish's own poem. "Conquistador" is, in one sense, a poem within a poem within a poem. The action proper is sustained in the pathos of the recollection of Bernal Diaz, and that, in turn, is defined by MacLeish himself; that is, the narrative is read in the light of Bernal Diaz's Preface, and that in the light of MacLeish's own Prologue. The final effect is of something twice refracted. What, apparently, engaged the imagination of the poet was not the narrative or epic, but the lyric quality . . . the tone of reverie, the pathos of the big deeds swallowed in time. The poem is not regularly narrative at all; the narrative in the end is but a mechanism of reference for a simple lyric effect, but a mechanism so extended that the lyric effect loses force, a force not sufficiently redefined by the conclusion of the poem. But the narrative also serves a more immediate purpose: its long progress is sustained by the richness of MacLeish's physical perceptions, not by the movement of action, which itself is frequently submerged. The defect in structural and dramatic sense which impairs the lyrics impairs even more drastically "Conquistador". This means, I suppose, that MacLeish failed in his primary effort in the poem; it does not mean, however, that the poem did not deserve the Pulitzer award, an award which came with surprising acumen after the selection the previous year of George Dillon's girlish suavities.

In one poem MacLeish has said, "a poem should not mean but be". This is perfectly true, in one sense: the artist constructs a work which is self-contained, which does not demand external reference for its justification, in which idea is vindicated in terms of perception. Again he has asked: "Is it just to demand of us also to bear arms?" But the alternatives, as he puts them, are not necessary. The external reference of idea is propaganda; that is, the poet bears arms. The option, the choice MacLeish has taken, is a poetry in which idea is reduced to the minimum, even as a structural element. Temperamentally, he is very close to the Imagists, being preoccupied with the play of objective nature. Frequently this preoccupation does not even take the form of metaphor, that is, a background for reference; it is, rather, enumeration for its own sake, embedded, as it were, in a matrix of mood.

The positive streak of anti-intellectualism in MacLeish's work is healthy in so far as it recognizes the root of poetic sensibility in perception of physical nature; but limited in so far as it does not recognize any complexities in human nature or experience that are worth any great trouble on the poet's part to differentiate. This streak of anti-intellectualism appears in much of MacLeish's later work as a kind of primitivism. The abortive mythologies which began to take shape in the volume *New Found Land* are, in short, an apologia for the poet's own preoccupation:

> These men do not speak: they have seen
> Shapes solid and real, live things.

Again, in "Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City" the western lands were all "price" to the railroad speculators:

> . . . they never looked at it:
> why should they look at the land: they were Empire Builders:
> it was all in the bid and the asked and the ink on their books. . . .

And that, in a way, is the theme of "Conquistador" as well. Diaz "looked" at the land and the looking was what claimed the poet's interest. Further, the satirical aspects of MacLeish's poetry represent a satire directed against the people who take an abstract definition of the world. Morgan or Marx, it is all the same. He says:

> It may be that the earth and the men remain . . .
> There is too much sun on the lids of my eyes to be listening.

The text for much of MacLeish's work, with certain obvious qualifications, might well be this sentence from Whitman: "Nature (the only complete actual poem) existing calmly in the divine scheme, containing all, content, careless of the criticisms of a day, of these endless and windy chatterers."

MacLeish, like Wordsworth, has sought to immerse himself in nature, although, unlike Wordsworth, he has not maintained that one impulse from a vernal wood or the Great Plains or Lake Michigan instructs in regard to moral evil or good. Perhaps MacLeish is less fortunate than Wordsworth, who found in the philosophy of Hartley something to give a framework, and a certain variety, to his characteristic preoccupation. Both have the same strength and the same limitation: they have sought to keep fresh the poetic impulse by maintaining a constant connection with the richness of nature, and they have suffered because they were not able to dominate the richness of nature, to make it expressive. Both have been obsessed with the difficult relation of idea to the concrete materials of their art. Both have written much poetry about poetry, which, probably, is not the final business of the poet. I confess, however, that I had rather read MacLeish's *Poems, 1924-1933* than Wordsworth's *Prelude*; and I am prepared to accept whatever damnation that involves.

II

A Green Bough is of interest chiefly because of William Faulkner's considerable reputation as a novelist. His novels are poetic in the best sense of the word; but the poetry is of indifferent quality.

Most of the poems in this volume are tissued of conventional material and unvigorous clichés of phrase and rhythm. The first three poems are extremely diffuse in execution, and very vaguely conceived. They have an aimless anecdotal quality, exactly contrary to the effect of most of his prose. The very colourlessness of these pieces, as of most of the succeeding ones, is the most impressive thing about them; it is impressive because the accuracy and surprise of his perceptions in the novels are fairly constant. Here are "hands upon the key playing a music of lustrous silent gold"—a finicking and fatuous paradox; or "whose mouth, two notes laid one on other for a honeyed parting on the hived store"—a thing worthy of Stephen Phillips; or "silence like a priest on thin grey feet tells his beads of minutes on besides"—a thing worthy of Oscar Wilde. I provide this catalogue because, coming from the pen of Faulkner, these lines must be seen to be believed.

These poems, largely imitative of Cummings, Housman, and Elinor Wylie, will not enhance Faulkner's literary reputation. But they present a peculiar question, over and beyond the question why they should have been written at all: How is the author able to make such a forced separation between the two departments of his work? Apparently he has some conventional and mimetic set toward the poetic form, the attitude of the casual reader of verse. In any case, this poetry may be valuable after all: it may provide a sort of safety valve for a sentimentality, other than the sentimentality of violence, which except for these poems might infect the more excellent novels.

III

Now With His Love, by John Peale Bishop, serves, in one way, as an index to the poetical fashions of the last decade. A passage like this from the end of *Martyr's Hill* illustrates the style of Eliot in the *Preludes*:

> He seems to smoke a cigarette,
> And leaning on a bar of zinc

> The tired lover tries to think.
> Memory wipes away the night
> As a damp rag might smear a dirty glass.
> Above the bar he sees another face.

Several poems show traces of the precious wit that Eliot made current in his first collection of poems, and "Easter Morning" employs the same theme, the same sententiousness, and the same type of versification as "Gerontion". Borrowings from Pound are not uncommon here, in both original poems and translation. In certain poems, especially "Young Men Dead" and "Wish in Daytime" Bishop seems to be instructed by the practice of Yeats's middle period; and "Twelfth Night", a fine poem, indicates something of Yeats in another phase. There are occasional flashes of similarity to Cummings and MacLeish, but on those occasions Bishop need concede nothing to either poet in merit of performance.

Influence is perhaps not the precise word here. It is not so much that Bishop has merely imitated these poets as that he has deliberately worked from the same models as they and in the same poetic climate. But the precise use Bishop has made of these models may have been determined to a considerable extent by the older poets. And it is not that Bishop has merely re-adapted current techniques; it is that he has written with the same attitudes from which those techniques were developed. The major unification behind these poems seems to be the unification that a period affords its various fashions. In that sense these poems have a certain anonymity, or near anonymity. But Bishop is a writer of great discernment and scrupulous taste; his technical mastery, at least, gives a fairly constant impression throughout this book. Within terms of his premise this taste is meticulous and sure; to quarrel with it is to quarrel, not with the poet, but with the age itself. And Bishop's taste and technical accomplishment make *Now With His Love* one of the few distinguished volumes to appear in this country in the last two years; and make it appear probable that this volume, good as it is, will be but a prelude to a considerable achievement.

IV

John Masefield's *Tale of Troy* and Walter De La Mare's *Fleeting and Other Poems* scarcely need definition for any reader who has a previous acquaintance with the work of either poet; the two volumes are perfectly predictable. They are predictable in the way that a poem by E. A. Robinson or Robinson Jeffers or E. E. Cummings or Robert Hillyer or R. P. Tristram Coffin is predictable; it is certain to be written, and certain to be indistinguishable from the one before it. And it is almost, though not quite, certain to be an exercise in self-imitation marked by eccentric mannerism or conventional insipidity. It is churlish, however, to quarrel with Masefield because he is not Yeats, or with Hillyer because he is not MacLeish; these two have their audience and their honours, Masefield being Laureate and Hillyer's *Collected Poems* having recently appeared to crown his career.

V

W. H. Auden has been termed the satirist of the English "poetical renascence". The basis of this reputation is *The Orators, an English Study*, a very perverse, obscure, somewhat exciting, and at times powerful poem. It is composed of three books: the "Initiates", "Journal of an Airman", and "Six Odes". Most of the first two books is in prose, the third entirely in verse. It has been attacked by John Sparrow in his study *Sense and Poetry* as an example of unintelligible writing. The construction is by some principle of association which, except in its broadest outline, generally defies definition. It is more difficult, perhaps more confused, than *The Waste Land*, its most likely prototype. It is more difficult because the basic symbolism of *The Waste Land* was more apparent, and the mechanism of its system of ironic reference more accessible. The system of reference and symbol in *The Orators* is a personal, if not arbitrary, matter.

In the first section of Book I, "Address for a Prize-Day", the tone of the work is set in the speech of a visiting celebrity to the boys, a speech which moves from the clever innocence of parody to the question: "What do you think about England, this country of ours where nobody is well?" Then for conclusion:

> Draw up a list of rotters and slackers, of proscribed persons under headings like this. Committees for municipal improvement–the headmaster. Disbelievers in the occult –the school chaplain. The bogusly cheerful–the games master–the really disgusted–the teacher of modern languages. All these have got to die without issue. . . . Quick, guard that door. Stop that man. Good. Now boys hustle them, ready, steady,–go.

This parable of revolution is followed by two sections of a highly personal nature which are hard to relate to the remainder of the poem except by the tone of disorder and despair pervading them. The fourth section, "Letter to a Wound", effects a sort of ironic resolution for Book I. The victim has fallen in love with his own mortal hurt, takes a solace in its intimacy, and concocts from despair a contentment: "Nothing will ever part us. Good-night and God bless you, my dear. Better burn this."

Book II, "Journal of an Airman", is a *mélange* of prose and verse. From its essential confusion two or three suggestions emerge. The Airman is preparing for, or is already participating in, a civil war. Fragments similar to the material in the second and third sections of Book I, some of which hint at the Airman's personal curse, sexual in character, appear at intervals in Book II, but are subordinated to the preoccupation with the objective facts of his business, the stabilizing element in his despair. These facts are the "Airman's Alphabet":

> *Ace–* Pride of parents
> and photographed person
> and laughter in leather. . . .
>
> *Death–* Award for wildness
> and worst in the west
> and painful to pilots. . . .
>
> *Wireless–*Sender of signal
> and speaker of sorrow
> and news from nowhere.

The six odes of Book III are, in detail at least, the most interesting part of *The Orators*, the most pointed, most intense, and best constructed. They are, one might say, a distillation of the foregoing sections. The first five are primarily a definition of that country "where nobody is well":

I saw the brain-track perfected, laid for conveying
  The fatal error,
Sending the body to islands or after its father,
  Cold with a razor:
One sniffed at a root to make him dream of a woman,
One laid his hands on the heads of dear little pages;
Neither in the bed nor on the *arrête* was there shown me
  One with power.

And there is the brooding expectation of violence, certain and aimless, in the ode "To My Pupils":

You've a very full programme, first aid, gunnery, tactics,
The technique to master of raids and hand-to-hand fighting;
  Are you in training?

The last ode, probably the most conventional in technique but an excellent poem, concludes the volume on another note:

Not, Father, further do prolong
  Our necessary defeat;
Spare us the numbing zero-hour,
  The desert-long retreat. . . .

Be not another than our hope;
  Expect we routed shall
Upon your peace; with ray disarm,
  Illumine, and not kill.

The *Poems* exhibit the same obsessions and same temper as *The Orators*. "Charade", a dramatic fable of the collapse of civilization, is really *The Orators* in little. Other pieces, such as X, XI, XII, or XXIX, are equally specific; and even in most of the others a constant reference for image and metaphor is found in the same background, the broken minehead, the dead mill, the half-finished culvert, the fortified farm. The "explosion of mania" is imminent: "It is later than you think." Satire in these poems has replaced the irony of the preceding decade, the tone defined by Eliot and Pound. The temper is more drastic and morose, more specifically critical. If Eliot, for instance, has certain technical obligations to the Jacobean dramatists, Auden has a nearer affinity in his materials and attitude. He is obsessed with the confusion of his world, with the confusion of issue under the level of conventional life, with sexual frustration and homosexuality (which, it seems, bears some relation to his notion of revolution), with the stop-gap futilities and windiness of the world's rulers.

If we really want to live, we'd better start to try;
If we don't, it doesn't matter, but we'd better start to die.

For violence is a kind of cathartic. It is probably to be preferred to the alternative, a "classic fatigue". And afterwards,

> The few shall be taught who want to understand,
> Most of the rest shall love upon the land;
> Living in one place with a satisfied face
> All of the women and most of the men
> Shall work with their hands and not think again.

Meanwhile for the individual

> . . . there is left remaining
> Our honour at least,

> And a reasonable chance of retaining
> Our faculties to the last.

That is, if the individual has will enough.

Auden is a stylist of great resourcefulness. He has undoubtedly drawn heavily on the experimenters of the past decade, Eliot, Pound, Graves, and Riding in verse, and Joyce and Woolf (especially *The Waves*) in prose. But he is not an imitator, for very rarely has he failed to assimilate completely what the model had to give. He is not a writer of one style. The lyrics written in short lines display an aptitude for economy of statement that is almost ultimate; he has sometimes paid for this by an insoluble crabbedness or a grammatical perversity in the unsuccessful pieces, but a few of this type are among his best poems. On the whole, he is most effective in the poems using a long line, poems where the difficulty his verse offers is more often legitimate, that is, derives from an actual subtlety of thought and effect rather than from a failure in technical mastery. Some of this type, however, suffer, as does *The Orators*, from an excessive obliquity or purely arbitrary construction. It may be that a strong talent engaged in the process of experiment and self-discipline must almost of necessity be prodigal of such half-realized fragments. There is no reason, nevertheless, for Auden to be shy of the broad, direct effect in poetry, for his talent has enough vitality to support the naked statement.

Auden, I am fairly confident, may be trusted to solve a good many of his stylistic problems as they arise unless he is deluded by the worship of obscurity for obscurity's sake. The graver problem that may confront him is the one of theme. His present preoccupations, if their treatment remains naïve and overt, may well result in something like a formula, a danger which both Eliot and Pound have frequently succumbed to. Satire, undertaken on his present premise, might mean a mere multiplication of instance; as a matter of incidental reference, as it occurs in much of Donne's work where it is absorbed into the tissue of the poetry, it might be a source of strength and enrichment. For the present it seems that the most constantly satisfactory poems may be pieces of that nature, for instance, II, III, XI, XV, XVI, and XXIV. But it is useless to prescribe or predict.

Auden *is* the advertised English "poetical renascence", although Stephen Spender is claimed on the jacket of his *Poems* as its "lyric poet". In the short period since the publication of that volume his work has already been considerably over-rated. What is best is deeply indebted to Auden's influence; at least I assume this to be the case because of Auden's infinitely greater force and fertility. As a matter of fact, Spender is probably an inferior poet to John Pudney, whose work (*Spring Encounter*) is practically unknown in this country and who seems to have profited more in a small field from some of the suggestions of Auden's poetry. Space has compelled me to be thus dogmatic about Spender. From those enthusiastic about his work I can only ask pardon for my dogmatism and a re-inspection of his performance, a re-inspection of his thoroughly conventional, "poetical" idiom, his relaxed rhythms, and his thin, almost feminine, subject matter.

As for the "renascence", it remains to be seen whether a swallow can make a summer.

Five Poems

I. Fear

In their thin eyes the sheeting of your name,
The blood's rippling change casts in the form
Of empty wakings and the vacant streets
The lamentable torn possessions of their hell,—

The running peoples on that bloody way
Articulate your rank, the jeering names;
It is you repeated in the shaking lights
The child hangs sprawling in his vacant sky.

You are uttered in the simple and forgetful words
The homing seaman, the soldier falling to his stage,
Pronounce in commentary on their state.
The child rocking in her empty room,

Patient, sleepless, haunted by your dreaming shape—
Helpless and suffering in a tale
That girl told in indifference and courtesy.
She serves a symbol for that world,

The passion of our ending world.
Within that slanting-shadowed fire-hung flowering room,
Fear, branched and netted, jetting by her hands,
Struck out its strangling change within her breast;

And now the windows, shaken and obscured with snow,
The rusting statue, ermined, argent, ice-encrusted, hoar,
That dead world outside, its mind
Softened, pitying, confused with snow,—

A child's words, swollen with weakness and pain,
Could paint our sawn and mortal world,
And scorn that sawdust-gushing wound
Tended with pity and unmending love;

But it's unfed and in the end betrayed,
Sucked hollow by those gazing sheep-like forms,
That dreaming and inhuman world,
The forest of a winter night.

II.

O weary mariners, here shaded, fed,
Dull as the wave, old hostages to sleep,
Well-bearded, eloquent, the world's hands,
Take what the kind sea brings to your feet—
Shells, rays, tributes of the unsparing deep.

Here, perhaps, the shaved pinnacles of sand,
Containing so much worth, will be abashed—
Clouds torn by the storm and night of heaven
Come home to you, rest dripping by your shores—
And bend, magnificent, docile, proud,

The palms to lay their branches in your hands.
Your dwelling-place is full of leaves and murmurs,
And coldly, beaten and drunk, the waves come in
And hold their arms and voices to your land

So that one night the mermaid's bitter cries
Sound through your blind and monstrous dreams,
And as you struggle in the whelming deep,
She gasps her green life out upon the sands.

III

The man with the axe stands profound and termless,
Fixed in the progression of foregone regret—
Yet how forgotten? for he who stands in time is timeless,
The axe swings forever, it will never relent.

Tears will corrupt his fading rancour
And drowsy memory turn again its foreknown pain—
The shuddering hand will hide the shuttered window.
Sigh the last term, the axe strikes again.

Mindless and heedless, the corrupt and fading flowers
Of your bitter wit and sore content
Among the grasses wreathe the forgotten virtues
That make him weep, who can never relent.

IV.

Above the waters in their toil
Where the land song slowly came
The forms within their caverns wept
As fancies in the grottoed isles

Resuming the semblance of their fear
Had seen the wavering moon reveal
The hooded Electra sheet her eyes
With water islands and the smoke

Bending palely, the wind's burden . . .
And as she wept, the petals of the dew
Rose from her skin and from the leaves
The furies fondled with their hands.

V.

The cow wandering in the bare field,
Her chain dangling, aimless,—
The Negro sitting in the ashes,
Staring, humming to the cat,—

Their greyed figures, muffled in snow,
Perhaps, outside the starred window,
At that hour when the sun has rusted away,
Range themselves in the only order they know—

These are the inhabitants of the country of the mind,
Or only the marching motion of the mind,
But still, this is what the mind gives the mind.
Standing there, familiar, brutal, and resigned,

A few trees, gelatinous, evergreen,
Powdered and leaden, creaking in one's age's snow,
That is, the mind's aging, the sky's covering snow,
Speak, bend, so vacantly as to seem

The thirsty images of a dream.
I summon them then once more from memory
Into this wooden room, dripping and warm,
To chorus for you their bad charm,

Because I knew their true living forms.
And how shall I make you, mossy, bearded, mournful,
A stuffed father on a Christmas night,
Cry out in pride and blessedness, O children!

RANDALL JARRELL

Destiny

An Ode

Whatever voice made burden for the songs
Of the stilled lips, what lasting resonance
Still mourns for Lycidas and broods his wrongs,
Or quails at mad Orestes' whirling glance—
  Fire in the cooled and common diction,
  Visit my words! Speak in this fiction!

I said: once free of this, Death's velvet sea,
When health returns, I'll write to Destiny
  Some tribute. Wild and insecure,
  I used to fear her painted lure,

Decoy to what is wild in minds of men.
I saw them stare and turn, and turn again,
  And sidle back forgetfully
  To learn too well the mystery—

Dark taloned shadow! Fear has left my mind.
I found a hill one spring and dwelt behind
  An upcurled slope. Though drowsing there,
  Sifting with bees the burdened air,

I from that grassy rampart often gazed
Down on a harbour with blue reaches glazed
  In fastnesses of peaks—bright tray
  Where carven boat and island lay!

Far off the ocean fills a pillared gate;
The bay is bleak, but violet waters pour
From the hooked channel and adventurous strait
Where tufted isles stand alien to the shore:
  I thought of lands in blue exile,
  Of mazy coasts like Pelops' isle:

Of Pelops' isle, its close geography,
The shell-like beach, the vine and generous tree—
  Shade for the glow of mellowing fruit,
  Or figs aburst, the small bird's loot:

Of laureled Peace! But I remembered more
How witless lips sank rattling on that shore:
  One, like a god empowered to see,
  Saw o'er himself a cliff nod free:

And a betrayer drooped an acid eye
At Agamemnon's suffocating cry:
  Of wildfire rising at his glance,
  The son had quick inheritance.

Destiny, huntress, beat no more the wood,
Conceal the deadly falcon in his hood—
  The game is down! That furious kin
  Fallen, pooled in their bloody sin!

Thus I glimpsed fate askew, as men the sun;
But once at school in our hilarious dread,
With bits of match-smoked glass, we viewed the one—
Core in a ghastly ring, small, perfect, red;
  The other flits like shades of sea,
  Lead-blue revolving constantly,

Time's shadowy flight! One day, in stealthy line,
By isle and cliff, toward fog, with jagged spine
  Like a sea-serpent, low, discreet,
  From anchorage moved the battle fleet.

No mystery where it went!—that jealous sire
Of engines clawed with steel and mouthed with fire,
  Prowling in jungles, mad! My sight
  Drank shadows of a fatal night

Which yet may come, which may be Destiny!
Yea, and the night which rose where formerly,
  On wharves and work-shops, smoke had been,
  And stared with Hunger's pestilent grin!

And now beneath such hills as mine men wait,
Holding a bitter vigil, hard with hate;
  They soon will seize the silent mill,
  And feed forever on its chill:

Charmed by a bloodless mask of Destiny—
Child-like, unanswerable, bland—the Causal Scheme,
They rise, thinking in present links they see
The chained effects, their utmost ends. Vain dream!
  Foresight is God's. With it, man's voice
  Could bend the future to his choice.

So winter came, and I unreconciled
To the dark age of the empiric child;
  I hoped the child would spare the world—
  With hope too frail to be unfurled.

Winter brought sickness. Surgeons slanted in,
Where in my dream the rolling sun had been;
  Then left me to my vacant wall,
  Still land with no beloved footfall;

There livid phobias stalked, each come to try
My strength, and each prevailed, for each was I—
  What I had loved and been and said,
  Come back to prove that they were dead.

Thus fate let slip her trappings, and I saw
My nothingness her cruel immeasurable law;
  But in a dear returnèd face,
  Bright festival to her brief grace.

Destiny, hold your eagle from my head;
With no Promethean struggle in your chain
I lie, restored to my familiar bed,
Choosing where soon with friends I'll walk again:
  Your plan foresees my little will:
  Obeying, I deny you still.

HOWARD BAKER

Five Poems

Letter to a Friend

Our eyes have viewed the burnished vineyards where
No leaf falls, and the grape, unripening, ripes.
It was a dream without fruition as
Without our terror. We have seen it:

And seen the ever-rounding vaulty-structured
Ocean moveless, and the mortised keel
Unmoving o'er the sunlit lichened wave.
That voyage, then each to each we said, had rendered

Courage superfluous, hope a burden.
But living still, we live by them, and only
Thus, or thus, stuttering, eke them out,
Our huddled alms to crammed Necessity.

Fears come, old wranglers out of sleep, and go:
The caterpillar knows its leaf, the mole
Its hummock, who has known his heart, or knows
The carriage of this action, set and sprung?

In this, the season of engendering of toads,
I write to you, to you unfrighted yet
Before the blunt experiment of time.
Your triumph is not commensurate to stone.

Aubade for Hope

Dawn: and foot on the cold stair treading or
Thump of wood on the unswept hearth-stone are
Comment on the margin of consciousness,
A dirty thumb-smear by the printed page.

Thumb-smear: nay other, for the blessed light
Thus acclaimed, as a ducal progress by
The scared cur, wakes them that wallowed in
The unaimed faceless horror of their dream.

All night, the ice sought out the rotten bough:
In sleep they heard. And now they stir, as east
Beyond the formal gleam of landscape sun
Has struck the senatorial hooded hill.

Light; the groaning stair; the match aflame;
The negro woman's hand horned grey with cold,
That lit the wood; a child's eyes sullen
In the August street—I name some things that shall,

As voices speaking from a farther room,
Muffled, bespeak us yet for time and hope:
For Hope that like a blockhead grandam ever
Above the ash and spittle croaks and leans.

Eidolon

All night, in May, dogs barked in the hollow woods.
Hoarse, from secret huddles of no light,
By moonlit bole, hoarse, the dogs gave tongue.
In May, by moon, no moon, thus: I remember
Of their far clamour the throaty infatuate timbre.

The boy, all night, lay in the black room,
Tick-straw, all night, harsh to the bare side.
Staring, he heard; the clotted dark swam slow.
Far off, by wind, no wind, unappeasable riot
Provoked, resurgent, the bosom's nocturnal disquiet.

What hungers kept the house? under the rooftree
The boy; the man, clod-heavy, hard hand uncurled;
The old man, eyes wide, spittle on his beard.
In dark was crushed the may-apple: plunging, the rangers
Of dark remotelier belled their unhouselled angers.

Dogs quartered the black woods: blood black on
May-apple at dawn, old beech-husk. And trails are lost
By rock, in ferns lost, by pools unlit.
I heard the hunt. Who saw, in darkness, how fled
The white eidolon from fangèd commotion rude?

Two Poems on Truth

I. Aged Man Surveys the Past Time

Adept, too late, at art of tears he stands
By gravest orchard in diminished light:
And aged eyes, like twilit rain, their effort
Spill gentlier than herb-issue on a hill.

Grief's smarting condiment may satisfy
His heart to lard the wry and blasphemous theme.
(Once softlier far did Pontius ponder on
His jest before our Lord the steel partook.)

Truth, not truth. The heart, how regular
And sure. How ambidextrous is regret.
Time has no mathematic. Could Orpheus map
The rocky and bituminous descent?

By fruitful grove, unfruited now by winter,
The well-adapted and secular catbird
Whimpers its enmity and invitation.
Light fails beyond the barn and blasted oak.

Sweetly trifoliate strumpet spray of green
And crocus-petal, pale, in secret are
April's catalysis: how soon announce
Thy godless summer and the dusty road!

II. Toward Rationality

Brothers, stones on this moraine of time,
And I, a stone: for you were Xerxes' guests
In littoral picnic by the unfettered brine.
This commentary, perhaps, will discommode.

The cortex-knotty apple draws by blue
Occasion from the lambent air, what?
Perpetual blithe and cap-à-pie, you heard
That modifying sound: ungirt seatone.

Ransack your backward calendar for sages,
Their architectural and russet names,
Or kings who sat with liberal sunny brow;
Even the postulate zinnia by the path.

Red kine err not, nor under Capricorn
The seaswoop fisher, abler Ptolemy,
The cedar standing close to my house wall
Groans in the long drag of the east wind.

Too happy, happy gentlemen, you freeze
Downward. Shuffle the picturecard mind
And deal: while your kind faces all reflect
The rude Abhorson's spittlebearded grin.

ROBERT PENN WARREN

Lee in the Mountains

1865-1870

Walking into the shadows, walking alone
Where the sun falls through the ruined boughs of locusts
Up to the President's office . . .
                                        Hearing the voices
Whisper, *Hush it is General Lee!* And strangely
Hearing my own voice say *Good morning boys.*
(Don't get up. You are early. It is long
Before the bell. You will have long to wait
On these cold steps. . . .)
                              The young have time to wait.
But the soldiers' faces under the tossing flags
Lift no more by any road or field,
And I am spent with old wars and new sorrow.
Walking the rocky path, where the steps decay
And the paint cracks and grass eats on the stone.
It is not General Lee, young men . . .
It is Robert Lee in a dark civilian suit who walks,
An outlaw fumbling for the latch, a voice
Commanding in a dream where no flag flies.

My father's house is taken and his hearth
Left to the candle-drippings where the ashes
Whirl at a chimney-breath on the cold stone.
I can hardly remember my father's look, I cannot
Answer his voice as he calls farewell in the misty
Mounting where riders gather at gates.
He was old then—I was a child—his hand
Held out for mine, some daybreak snatched away,
And he rode out, a broken man. Now let
His lone grave keep, surer than cypress roots,
The vow I made beside him. God too late

Unseals to certain eyes the drift
Of time and the hopes of men and a sacred cause.
The fortune of the Lees goes with the land
Whose sons will keep it still. My mother
Told me much. She sat among the candles,
Fingering the *Memoirs*, now so long unread.
And as my pen moves on across the page
Her voice comes back, a murmuring distillation
Of old Virginia days now done to death,
The hurt of all that was and cannot be.

Why did my father write? I know he saw
History clutched as a wraith out of blowing mist
Where tongues are loud, and a glut of little souls
Laps at the too much blood and the burning house.
He would have his say, but I shall not have mine.
What I do is only a son's devoir
To a lost father. Let him only speak.
The rest must pass to men who never knew
(But on a written page) the strike of armies,
And never heard the long Confederate cry
Charge through the muzzling smoke or saw the bright
Eyes of the beardless boys go up to death.
It is Robert Lee who writes with his father's hand—
The rest must go unsaid and the lips be locked.

If all were told, as it cannot be told—
If all the dread opinion of the heart
Now could speak, now in the shame and torment
Lashing the bound and trampled States—

If a word were said, as it cannot be said—

I see clear waters run in Virginia's Valley
And in the house the weeping of young women
Rises no more. The waves of grain begin.
The Shenandoah is golden with new grain.
The Blue Ridge, lapped in a haze of light,

Thunders no more. The horse is at plough. The rifle
Returns to the chimney crotch and the hunter's hand.
And nothing else than this? Was it for this
That on an April day we stacked our arms
Obedient to a soldier's trust—to sink, to lie
Ground by heels of little men,
Forever maimed, defeated, lost, impugned?
And was I then betrayed? Did I betray?

If it were said, as still it might be said—
If it were said, and a word should run like fire,
Like living fire into the roots of grass,
The sunken flag would kindle on wild hills,
The brooding hearts would waken, and the dream
Stir like a crippled phantom under the pines,
And this torn earth would quicken into shouting
Beneath the feet of ragged men—

The quill
Turns to the waiting page, the sword of Lee
Bows to the rust that cankers and the silence.

Among these boys whose eyes lift up to mine
Within grey walls where droning wasps repeat
A hollow reveille, I still must face
Day after day, the courier with his summons
Once more to surrender, now to surrender all.
Without arms or men I stand, but with knowledge only
I face what long I saw, before others knew,
When Pickett's men streamed back, and I heard the tangled
Cry of the Wilderness wounded, bloody with doom.

The mountains, once I said, in the little room
At Richmond, by the huddled fire, but still
The President shook his head. The mountains wait,
I said in the long beat and rattle of siege
At cratered Petersburg. Too late

We sought the mountains and those people came.
And Lee is in mountains now, beyond Appomattox,
Listening long for voices that never will speak
Again; hearing the hoofbeats come and go and fade
Without a stop, without a brown hand lifting
The tent-flap, or a bugle call at dawn,
Or ever on the long white road the flag
Of Jackson's quick brigades. I am alone,
Trapped, consenting, taken at last in mountains.

It is not the bugle now, or the long roll beating.
The simple stroke of a chapel bell forbids
The hurtling dream, recalls the lonely mind.
Young men, the God of your father is a just
And merciful God who in this blood once shed
On your green altars measures out all days,
And measures out the grace
Whereby alone we live;
And in His might He waits,
Brooding within the certitude of time,
To bring this lost forsaken valour
And the fierce faith undying
And the love quenchless
To flower among the hills to which we cleave,
To fruit upon the mountains whither we flee,
Never forsaking, never denying
His children and His children's children forever
Unto all generations of the faithful heart. Amen.

DONALD DAVIDSON

Deep South

I. The House to the Man

Here is no easy fate, nor may you find
What you came forth to see—
Not solemn columns only
Nor the broad splendour of the sun
Dappling the wide white wall
With dancing patterns of shadow:
No, not these things shall reveal me, not the sweep of the lawn,
Nor the peace of the hall,
With its great cupboards flung open, the breadth of the doors
Forever unclosed:
Nor the croon of the slow dark voices, the patient unhurrying gait
Of those that in me once reposed.
These may forever wait,
Might in proud grace undisclosed,
But not the strength, the vast strength of foundations fixed to the earth,
Stone rooted to stone,
And the trees that whisper beyond, the solemn trees drearily swinging
Their aged incredible beards;
Spying upon the graveyard away off there in the corner;
These shall be mine:
These shall do as you feared;
Sapping the lives that live by them, burning them down,
Taking each one in its turn;
No liquor was ever brewed that could subdue them;
They shall go on
Ghost against man, till the last hand

Has smoothed back the lawn,
Dusted the chairs, made the feast ready
For the guest who never came.
Few men will know of this, few will spy closely yet
love me
Still more deep, for the stains
Because they are clear, few will seek out still the cricket
Chirping on in the autumn rains.
Therefore I say it is better to let me go,
Better to break me down,
Shear the wall off, topple the trees with their burden,
Trek for the north, and begone;
Than to sit here still listlessly brooding on quiet,
Still aimless and wan,
While over the Southern fields swings the immitigable
Gold hawk of the great Sun.

II. The Song of Natchez Under the Hill

Rifles are rammed full;
Bowie-knives are sharpened;
Life loved Natchez Under the Hill.

Columned porticoes rose;
Great gates were opened;
Power stirred Natchez Under the Hill.

Faro-tables clinked,
Tall glass was lifted;
Wild went Natchez Under the Hill.

Cotton-bales were rolled,
Laden steamboats tooted;
Deep droned Natchez Under the Hill.

Silks flashed and spurs
Clinked; sabers rattled.
Strong grew Natchez Under the Hill.

Cotton-bolls burst:
Surged South the chimneys;
Deep dreamed Natchez Under the Hill.

Federal gunboats boomed
Pounding down the river;
Stark stood Natchez Under the Hill.

Locomotives shrieked,
Lordly Negroes swaggered.
Cold took Natchez Under the Hill.

Moth, worm and ruin,
Ate through the rooftop:
Lone lay Natchez Under the Hill.

Factory-hooters blared,
Empires elsewhere flourished,
Quiet filled Natchez Under the Hill.

Feet slipped and staggered
Down old creaking stairways;
Ghosts grew in Natchez Under the Hill.

Floods rose and ate
Through the yellow bluff-tops;
Water whelmed Natchez Under the Hill.

Roses grew again,
In weed-haunted gardens;
Give a rose to Natchez Under the Hill!

Cities swarmed with men,
Empires rose and vanished;
Death took Natchez Under the Hill.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

For Margaret Hamilton

Who died August 31, 1933

The imagination, powerful to paint
The absent face upon the empty air,
And to make sound the floor below with steps
Hurrying with happy clatter to my stair,

Brings me again the laughter, the swift return
At noon of the child who haunts my heart, my day,
The return toward which the quiet morning moves
And the steady sun with bright Time in his ray.

O gone forever, while joy mounts my stair
With staggering feet and high uncertain voice,
I remember your death, and with the same heartbeat,
The single beat, I grieve and I rejoice.

Be ever mingled with our happiness,
Dear vivid memory, often mount our stair,
And stand beside the living loveliness.
Beside her substance, paint your shadow there.

JANET LEWIS

Two Poems

The Mothers

Sealights reflected on the rocks
And sunlight baffled by the waves:

O shores! what greens that waver in the shallows
What depths of being, invading blues,
What shadows under waves!

They sit like vast shadows on the rocks
They stand and are women on the sands.
Their hands are sober on the rocks
And in their eyes are myths conceived.

These hands have dug, their loins have laboured
These eyes have seen
The man that leaned above them, hasty,
They have known the hands that pushed their thighs apart
The ecstasy they have known and the burning
The heart against the heart
And the heart under the heart
The ecstasy they have known and the burden
The child's hand that gropes across the heart.

But now they sit by the seas
And are unmoved by the lisping sands
Or by the losing splendour of the shelly moon.

Our course, I think, is nearer to the sun.

Over their eyelids in etherial bronze
Deploy, Icarus! For among their rocks
Are deeps where a man might drown.

What shall we do? We are their sons,
Insane of courage, lost to will,
Failing, not fathers to our sons?

Serene, in the ears of the flesh they hear
The rude white-flashing rock-noise.
Their seas have not the fret of fortune.
In our appeasement is their peace.

When they set out upon these sands
It will be, huge feet, toward eternity.
With the calm march of night they will go
And to the assuagement of goddesses.

In what region, by what shores,
White marts and towers,
By what margins of what noisier seas
Do I think thee to be, my country?

After revolt, what triumphs and what deaths?

Your Chase Had a Beast in View

Long time those gay and spotted hides
We hunted, riding; luxurious
Leopards in the forest slid.
At times it seemed they hunted us.

For just behind deep tendrils they
Seen and unseen, lengthened slunk;
Where the sun groped a greener day
They overleapt the rotted trunk.

Long time we rode and still within
The forest, eyes; hidden we felt
A sinewy speed; a javelin
Once lifted to a snarling pelt

And fell and straightened to the hand.
Both knew that death must be delayed.
And on we rode the leopards and
The followed following cavalcade.

O happiness! The lively long
Advancing of each golden beast!
The odour of their might was strong
The morning wind was in the east.

But noon was cruel on our sight.
We rode into the forest's hem
And when the sun was at its height
In a small glade we slaughtered them.

We cut each throat. We dragged our knives
Across each looking throat. Their blood
Dyed death upon our hands. Our lives
Exultant spurted in the flood

A moment young. Then silence broke
At the sweet destruction of
Those spotted beasts. And a shout spoke.
The youngest sang a stranger love.

Only in singing it might be
Supported by the sense alone,
One syllable of ecstasy
Confusing shame, confounding bone.

JOHN PEALE BISHOP

Two Poems

He Was Not Wise

He was not wise to dally with the curves
Of earth and set his fancy continent-free.
The game at first was merry, and he smiled;
He was at home with aliens, land and sea—
Stoking a fire with bullies west by south
In the same hour that Persia curled her mouth.

He felt the flame, he tapped the pearly teeth;
He blessed himself and nestled to his kind.
But then he scudded further, and beheld
Tall men of China chatting as they dined;
Flew on, and by an island strange of name
Struck sail; for now the terror of it came.

One porch too many, folding in its shade
Some brow unseen, some lip, destroyed the count.
Here was the death of number, the abstract
Mute reckoning—how dim the pure amount!
How far desire, how close the little space
Encircling every watched and silent face.

What Is the Hour

What is the hour, how loud the clock,
When the heart knows itself for rock?
Or is it ignorant? Does the rose
More silently than centuries close?
Perhaps no man so long ahead
Predicts the flint, proclaims the dead.

There was the year it opened wide
And tore a hole in his calm side.
Strange the petals' hingèd strength,
Staining, staining all his length
With wasted blood; until they shut,
And he forgot the flesh's cut.

There was the day it stirred again
And straightway stopped; and chilled him then.
There was the fear his pain had ceased.
But it returned, and it increased;
There was a rose within him said
He must be happy while it bled.

Is there no rose inside him now?
Is there no vein to disavow
This rocky stillness? So he stands,
Exploring silence with his hands;
Wonders, waits; and leans to hear
That valvèd sound of yesteryear.

MARK VAN DOREN

An Eclogue for Christmas

A. I meet you in an evil time.
B. The evil bells
Put out of our heads, I think, the thought of everything else.

A. The jaded calendar revolves
Its nuts need oil, carbon chokes the valves,
The excess sugar of a diabetic culture
Rotting the nerve of life and literature;
Therefore when we bring out the old tinsel and frills
To announce that Christ is born among the barbarous hills
I turn to you whom a morose routine
Saves from the mad vertigo of being what has been.

B. Analogue of me, you are wrong to turn to me,
My country will not yield you any sanctuary,
There is no pinpoint in any of the ordnance maps
To save you when your towns and town-bred thoughts collapse,
It is better to die *in situ* as I shall,
One place is as bad as another. Go back where your instincts call
And listen to the crying of the town-cats and the taxis again
Or wind your gramophone and eavesdrop on great men.

A. Jazz-weary of years of drums and Hawaiian guitar
Pivoting on the parquet I seem to have moved far
From bombs and mud and gas have stuttered on my feet
Clinched to the streamlined and butter-smooth trulls of the élite

The lights irritating and gyrating and rotating in
gauze—
Pomade-dazzle, a slick beauty of gewgaws—
I who was Harlequin in the childhood of the century
Posed by Picasso beside an endless opaque sea
Have seen myself sifted and splintered in broken
facets
Tentative pencillings, endless liabilities, no assets,
Abstractions scalpelled with a palette-knife
Without reference to this particular life
And so it has gone on, I have not been allowed to be
Myself in flesh or face, but abstracting and dissecting me
They have made of me pure form, a symbol or a
pastiche,
Stylized profile, anything but soul and flesh:
And that is why I turn this jaded music on
To foreswear thought and become an automaton.

B. There are in the country also of whom I am afraid—
Men who put beer into a belly that is dead
Women in the forties with terrier and setter who
whistle and swank
Over down and plough and Roman road and daisied
bank
Half-conscious that these barriers over which they
stride
Are nothing to the barbed wire that has grown
round their pride.

A. And two there are, as I drive in the city, who suddenly perturb—
The one sirening me to draw up by the kerb
The other, as I lean back, my right leg stretched
creating speed,
Making me catch and stamp, the brakes shrieking,
pull up dead:

She wears silk stockings taunting the winter wind
He carries a white stick to mark that he is blind.

B. In the country they are still hunting, in the heavy shires
Greyness is on the fields and sunset like a line of pyres
Of barbarous heroes smoulders through the ancient air
Hazed with factory dust and, orange opposite, the moon's glare
Goggling yokel-stubborn through the iron trees
Jeers at the end of us, our bland ancestral ease,
We shall go down like palaeolithic man
Before some new Ice Age or Genghiz Khan.

A. It is time for some new coinage, people have got so old
Hacked and handled and shiny from pocketing they have made bold
To think that each is himself through these accidents, being blind
To the fact that they are merely the counters of an unknown Mind.

B. A Mind that does not think, if such a thing can be,
Mechanical Reason, capricious Identity.
That I could be able to face this domination nor flinch—

A. The tin toys of the hawker move on the pavement inch by inch
Not knowing that they are wound up; it is better to be so
Than to be, like us, wound up and while running down to know.

B. But everywhere the pretence of individuality recurs—

A. Old faces frosted with powder and choked in furs

B. The jutlipped farmer gazing over the humpbacked wall

A. The commercial travellers joking in the urinal

B. I think things draw to an end, the soil is stale

A. And over-elaboration will nothing now avail,
The street is up again, gas electricity or drains,
Ever changing conveniences, nothing comfortable remains
Un-improved, as flagging Rome improved villa and sewer
(A sound-proof library and a stable temperature)
Our street is up, red lights sullenly mark
The long trench of pipes, iron guts in the dark,
And not till the Goths again come swarming down the hill
Will cease the clangour of the electric drill.
But yet there is beauty narcotic and deciduous
In this vast organism grown out of us,
On all the traffic-islands stand white globes like moons
The city's haze is clouded amber that purrs and croons
And tilting by the noble curve bus after tall bus comes
With an osculation of yellow light, with a glory like chrysanthemums.

B. The country gentry cannot change, they will die in their shoes
From angry circumstance and moral self-abuse
Dying with a paltry fizzle they will prove their lives to be
An ever-diluted drug, a spiritual tautology.

They cannot live once their idols are turned out
None of them can endure, for how could they, possibly, without
The flotsam of private property, pekinese and polyanthus
The good things which in the end turn to poison and pus,
Without the bandy chairs and the sugar in the silver tongs
And the inter-ripple and resonance of years of dinner-gongs
Or if they could find no more that cumulative proof
In the rain dripping off the conservatory roof?
What will happen when the only sanction the country-dweller has—

A. What will happen to us, planked and panelled with jazz?
Who go to the theatre where a black man dances like an eel
Where pink thighs flash like the spokes of a wheel, where we feel
That we know in advance all the jog-trot and the cake-walk jokes
All the bumfun and the gags of the comedians in boaters and toques
All the tricks of the virtuosos who invert the usual—

B. What will happen to us when the State takes down the manor wall
When there is no more private shooting or fishing, when the trees are all cut down
When faces are all dials and cannot smile or frown—

A. What will happen when the sniggering machine-guns in the hands of the young men

Are trained on every flat and club and beauty parlour and Father's den?
What will happen when our civilization like a long pent balloon–

B. What will happen will happen; the whore and the buffoon
Will come off best; no dreamers, they cannot lose their dream
And are at least likely to be reinstated in the new régime
But one thing is not likely–

A. Do not gloat over yourself
Do not be your own vulture, high on some mountain shelf
Huddle the pitiless abstractions bald about the neck
Who will descend when you crumple in the plains a wreck.
Over the randy of the theatre and cinema I hear songs
Unlike anything–

B. The lady of the house poises the silver tongs
And picks a lump of sugar, "ne plus ultra" she says
"I cannot do otherwise, even to prolong my days"–

A. I cannot do otherwise either, tonight I will book my seat–

B. I will walk about the farm-yard which is replete
As with the smell of dung so with memories–

A. I will gorge myself to satiety with the oddities
Of every artiste, official or amateur,
Who has pleased me in my rôle of hero-worshipper
Who has pleased me in my rôle of individual man–

B. Let us lie once more, say "what we think, we can"
The old idealist lie–

A. And for me before I die
Let me go the round of the garish glare–

B. And on the bare and high
Places of England, the Wiltshire Downs and the Long Mynd
Let the balls of my feet bounce on the turf, my face burn in the wind
My eyelashes stinging in the wind, and the sheep like grey stones
Humble my human pretensions–

A. Let the saxophones and the xylophones
And the cult of every technical excellence, the miles of canvas in the galleries
And the canvas of the rich man's yacht snapping and tacking on the seas
And the perfection of a grilled steak–

B. Let all these so ephemeral things
Be somehow permanent like the swallow's tangent wings:
Goodbye to you, this day remember is Christmas, this morn
They say, interpret it your own way, Christ is born.

LOUIS MACNEICE

Two Poems

John Brown

So shall his destiny be sharpened
To practice the stringency of sod
Where kind precision has contrived to loose
The taut gut that tethered him to God.

For passion ribbed him lean and thin
As money points the wide eyes of a thief.
All Virginia was quiet the day
They cast his name from disparate clay.

The slave shall not devise fury again
Nor shall the inordinate champion find
Eminent a void answer, echoing
The amphitheatre of a fervent mind.

Only the eyes remained achieved—
Eventual stone, the petitioned part;
And death, bristled, sidles by
The coiled secret of his heart.

Country Graveyard

Pride at last confronts the meadow
Forever, without amnesty,
Tempered in soil to a fine mettle
Now the pervious heart's annealed
To the integer of belief;
Contemning in stone rigour
The compass of unchastity.
There are many of these in meadow
Despiting generation's fury—

Kind involution of all our days.
But heart, fumbling a liturgy
That's shattered into epitaphs,
Rising inarticulate, obscures
The fearful reverence that is
The deep shadow of our minds.

MANSON RADFORD

Prelude to an Evening

Do not enforce the tired wolf
Dragging his infected wound homeward
To sit tonight with the warm children
Naming the pretty kings of France.

The images of the invaded mind
Being as the monsters in the dreams
Of your most brief enchanted headful,
Suppose a miracle of confusion:

That dreamed and undreamt become each other
And mix the night and day of your mind;
And it does not matter your twice crying
From mouth unbeautied against the pillow

To avert the gun of the same old soldier;
For cry, cock-crow, or the iron bell
Can crack the sleep-sense of outrage,
Annihilate phantoms who were nothing.

But now, by our perverse supposal,
There is a drift of fog on your mornings;
You in your peignoir, dainty at your orange cup,
Feel poising round the sunny room

Invisible evil, deprived and bold.
All day the clock will metronome
Your gallant fear; the needles clicking,
The heels detonating the stair's cavern.

Freshening the water in the blue bowls
For the buckberries, with not all your love,
You shall be listening for the low wind,
The warning sibilance of pines.

You like a waning moon, and I accusing
Our too banded Eumenides,
While you pronounce Noes wanderingly
And smooth the heads of the hungry children.

JOHN CROWE RANSOM

Three Poems

The Necklace: B. F.

Half of the clasp is warm and public birth,
And the other half the lasting, lonesome grave;
Precise between, the multiple-banded chain
Is linked of horseback riding and printed pages,
And the coloured acts of beautiful youth on earth;

And something past youth: formal, central cores
Surely embellished by radiating warmness
Not too profuse, but a wonderly pleasant garment
For souls a bit weary of steadily-clung-to armour,
And chilly from rain-wet pavements and draughty floors.

To early October moonlight, the pendant jewel,
A quarter slipped from the birth, returns fine rays
And shows nice contours; let who watches, waits,
One excellence to next, recall the latest
Impression, and judge, if this brings not renewal.

Scenery of Anger

Sun of Michigan over tree-hazed ridge
Ascends to beat a pale green lake with red;
We rack convenience to go fish that lake,
Despite mosquito bites, and goddamns said.

"What does a man love more than life?" also,
"Fear more than death and mortal strife?" inquires
A poem answering "Nothing". Anger
Makes strife. The limpid-greenish lake, the fires

Lap and flare in mind, and there we love them.
This one, this offal, draws out anger now:
In mind a red sun bursts; magnolia leaves
Have their green mangled by the crimson flow

That reds the world. And now an ill disgust
Enwaves this hateful many, downs to rest,
And the sick, distant mind defines liquid
Clear and calm as the lake of the fishers' quest,

Distilled from wrath squeezed in. And one red sun
Connotes us pike and joy, and one green lake;
One sun, one lake, nauseating hatred.
This also we endure for mind's strange sake.

Further Document on the Human Brain

This is a bit of rope that lies in the street,
And the stuff of oakum, but it is not blood
Out of half-naked seamen, nor the smoke
Grey from gun-mouths over the rough blue water
Where oaken old vessels would battle as they could.

This is waste-paper, flicked by a dust-filled breeze,
And what they make books on, but no feathered pen
In the hand of one who wore a ready dagger,
Wrote thunderous plays, praised his wine and tobacco,
And kept his whores in Queen Elizabeth's reign.

This is a fringe of a woman's fine black hair
Just seen past another; it is sheeting, cool
And crisply smooth to sheathe one's limbs between,
Behind a locked door; and a heart that makes its throbbing
Noticed much more than in class-rooms in a school.

W. R. MOSES

REVIEWS

Barons or Sneak-Thieves?*

Mr. Josephson has made a compilation of the main facts about the men who appropriated the United States during the forty years following the Civil War. As a summary, the book is useful, and can be recommended to anyone who cares to learn how shameful the story of American capitalism has been; but as an interpretation the book is pernicious. It is based on two major, and contradictory, fallacies: first, that there was something a little glamorous about these "robber barons", and second, that they were economically determined, that the whole process of which they formed a part was inevitable, and therefore not a proper subject for moral comment. It is important to realize, now that the time has come for undoing the work of this group of thieves, that they were not glamorous, but merely disgusting, and that they were no more "inevitable" than a filth-disease. They were the kind of thing that happens when society is careless.

The name, robber baron, connotes physical courage, a personal recklessness which may accompany the meanest of deeds but which in itself is pleasant. Presumably, Mr. Josephson did not mean to compliment his subjects by giving them this name, but merely to suggest that they were up to the same old game of grabbing property by force. But the suggestion is false. It was a new game these men were playing—the game of grabbing property by safe and secret force. There is a difference between the man who steals at the risk of getting an arrow through his throat, and the man who steals at the risk of having a writ issued against him by a judge whom he knows he can buy. The prerequisites for this new game are exhaustless greed, and lack of scruple; given that, the game is no more dangerous than stealing pennies off a dead man's eyes. It is interesting to notice, in reading Mr. Josephson's book, that among all these boring plutocrats the only one who stirs a shadow of sympathy is the unspeakable Jim Fisk, who at least had room in his wild nature for other vices than avarice. "Nothing is lost save honour", he commented after a slight defeat in the Erie war—and the phrase smells fresh, coming from that sty of hypocrites.

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* THE ROBBER BARONS, the Great American Capitalists 1861-1901 *by Matthew Josephson* (HARCOURT, BRACE. 474 pp. $3.00)

The theme of physical cowardice runs through the story of these "robber barons". All but one or two were young men at the time of the Civil War—the war that was being fought to give them their chance to spoil their country. Yet they all stayed modestly in the background, content to sell the Government leaky boats or worthless rifles, or to advance it a little of its own credit at a good rate of interest. One of the younger Mellons thought of enlisting: Mr. Josephson quotes from the letter the boy received from his father:

> I had hoped [wrote Judge Thomas Mellon] my boy was going to make a smart, intelligent business man and was not such a goose as to be seduced from duty by the

> declamations of buncomed speeches. It is only greenhorns who enlist. You can learn nothing in the army. . . . All now stay if they can and go if they must. Those who are able to pay for substitutes, do so, and no discredit attaches.

From Jay Gould (who, on being threatened by an angry victim, went so far as to give the man $25,000 of the man's own money), to the latest "robber baron" whom we have watched skulking through the Balkans and the Levant, it seems to be agreed in high financial circles that to cowardice "no discredit attaches". No wonder Charles Francis Adams, Jr., who spent twenty-five years in the railway business and knew these men well, wrote in his autobiography:

> Not one [of the great figures of finance] that I have ever known would I care to meet again either in this world or the next; nor is one associated in my mind with the idea of humour, thought or refinement.

It may be thought, however, that in spite of being mean of spirit and timorous of body, these men had some high power of mind that made it possible for them to grab such very large sums of money. But even that is not true. The grabbing was all too easy, for anyone endowed with industry, concentration, treachery, and a knack for buying Congressmen. One of the earth's richest stores of natural resources was being handed out for nothing, or for small bribes, to the first men who asked. It was not really so hard to be one of those first men—or safer still, to be one of the second men, who liquidated the first when they had grabbed more than they could manage. It took determination to hold the plunder, but not much to get it. To the railway builders alone there was given a hundred and fifty-eight million acres of land, with "all the coal, copper, oil, gold, silver under them, all the timber and stone above them". Collis Huntington, stunned at the vast booty that was pressed upon him, telegraphed from Washington to his partner in California: "We have drawn the Elephant." The same thing was happening to all his confrères. There remained only the congenial job of cheating one another for the carcasses. Such slack conditions do not breed great robbers, but only magnified sneak-thieves.

Mr. Josephson's second, and more important, error is his assumption that all this riot of knavery, this concentration of a nation's property in the hands of a few men, was "determined by economic forces". It is vital to combat this error. If it were true that the development of American capitalism was "economically determined", that the industrial revolution made inevitable the monopoly, by a few men, of the means of production, then there would be no cure now but to push forward, to socialize the monopoly by creating a communist state. But there is no economic necessity behind this process. There is moral obliquity, which can be fought and undone.

The industrial revolution came first to eighteenth-century England, a country in which, for over a hundred years, most of the means of production had been owned by a little group. Because the nation had already accepted this bad state of affairs, the result of the industrial revolution was to magnify the injustice. But so far as economics are concerned, this need not have happened. The new machinery merely created wealth. It was for man to decide how that wealth should be divided. England had already, in the pre-machine age, made the wrong decision. So her new wealth, like her old, was gathered by a few men. But America had been founded on the right decision. Her new wealth, like her old, could have been widely distributed. The industrial revolution merely created a rich temptation to betray this principle. We gave in to the temptation, and then tried to excuse ourselves by calling our moral failure "Fate", by pretending that when someone perfected a steam-engine things like Jay Gould became inevitable. If they were inevitable it was not steam that made them so, but our national character.

If we now go forward from a property-less capitalist state to a property-less communist state, it will not be steam or electricity that drives us, but a simple lack of the will to re-establish property.

HERBERT AGAR

A Muddled Philosophy*

WRITTEN from the viewpoint of philosophical idealism, this book explicitly challenges the modern cult of the quantitative. Implicitly it challenges the whole structure on which our civilization is based. The author proposes a new hierarchy of values, in which physical science will not dominate the intellectual scene. He demands the unification of all the minutiae of life into a recognized reality with relation to which particular realities may be appraised. Out of the miscellany of unrelated, disjointed facts,

* REALITY AND ILLUSION *by Richard Rothschild* (HARCOURT, BRACE. 442 pp. $3.50)

objects, and events he would fashion a philosophy to lead mankind toward that state of inner peace in which life's major conflicts shall be adequately resolved.

Taking the individual as his point of departure, he refuses to regard the self as real, in the sense of being substantive or static; he accepts it as real in the sense that a mathematical point is real. It is also unique, he says, with a uniqueness "which involves a lasting quality and hence an apparently static reality". This self and its world are joined so intimately that interaction between them is possible; from which he argues that the objective world is neither a mere ephemeral realm of nebulous dreams nor a hard and fast entity independent of the individual. Reality is for Mr. Rothschild an all-embracing unity, of which the individual is a part in some such way as the cell is a part of the organism. In the sense that the self alone is not the ultimate test of reality, our author regards reality as objective; yet even the most objective entities, he says, represent ideal transcendent values or meanings. He calls his system by the name of objective idealism.

The philosophical reader will have little difficulty in seeing that the starting-point in Mr. Rothschild's inquiry is not, as we are told, the individual but rather *the individual in the act of knowing*. Indeed the author is far more concerned with the knowing than with the knower or the known. This process of knowing he describes as a process of synthesis whereby the individual organizes the minutiae of experience into meaningful wholes:

> He perceives, let us say, a chair. He does so by successively observing aspects of it which he is able to synthesize

or set up in his mind as conforming to his concept of a chair.

As to the question of the first ideation of the chair-type, our author confesses that he is confronted with what he calls a paradox of consciousness:

> If a new experience can be had by the individual only in terms of his background of apperception, and if this background is itself built up from experiences, we are presented with the hen-egg problem.

In other words, his system breaks down when challenged by the acid test of epistemology: how does the individual first begin his knowing.

But this initial error of throwing all the emphasis on the act of knowing rather than on the nature of the knower leads our author into other difficulties, although he does not always recognize them as such. Since the self is assumed not to be substantive or static, Mr. Rothschild must describe the process of knowing in a manner which, to put it mildly, is little in accord with common sense. He tells us that, at any moment of knowing, the present synthesizing self must conceive of itself as split into two or more parts; and he goes on to say that all experience, even that of an individual on a desert island, may be said to involve three selves, the self of the instantaneous present, the self of the recent past, and a third self to whom the individual of the instantaneous present attempts to explain the experiences of the individual of the recent past. "The three are one individual and yet they are three individuals, like the Trinity in Christian dogma." (Surely a very unphilosophical statement of the doctrine of Three Persons in One God.)

Then, asking us to suppose that a second individual comes to the same desert island, he proceeds to tell us how our concepts become socialized; it seems that the individual may be said to constitute in himself a small social organism to which he welcomes other individuals who are able to adopt his own concepts as meaningful. Then we have this delightfully naïve exposition:

> Between these individuals, just as between the three parts of the self, there is an agreement as to terms and realities. And just as the three parts of the self are unified in *what is practically recognized as the oriented, continuing, remembering ego* so there is implicitly a gathering together of all those with whom the individual shares his life into a unified, continuing world-consciousness. . . .
>
> All reality therefore is fundamentally not only individually synthetic; it is also socially synthetic. And *this is what gives to reality its apparent externality, its hardness and fastness and resistance to individual whim.* For now we find that the individual's will, in its process of setting up reality, is always limited by what we call a group will. [The italics are mine.]

The first of these two paragraphs is an eloquent illustration of how the logic of fact defeats Mr. Rothschild's theory. The author refuses to admit that the self is substantive or static, yet he is forced to give what he calls practical recognition to a continuing, remembering ego. In other words, concepts do not hang together like a chain suspended in mid-air; on the contrary, they are held together by an underlying something, and that something is perforce recognized as a *continuum*, a static element of some sort.

That static element is the self. As to Mr. Rothschild's theory of a trinity of selves, he offers no argument whatever in support of it. The reader will easily dismiss it as contrary to common sense.

Our author's habit of unjustified assumption is further manifested in the second paragraph given above. What gives to reality its externality, its hardness and fastness, is the fact that it is actually external, actually hard and fast, over against the individual and in a certain way independent of him. It would be just as external, just as hard and fast to Mr. Rothschild's individual on the desert island; and the advent of a second individual is not necessary to make the externality, the hardness and fastness, any more real than it actually is. It is true that the gap between the individual and the world, between the thinking subject and the extra-mental object must somehow be bridged. But it is bridged in the individual's vital act of cognition, and for the essentially epistemological value of that vital act there is no need whatever to postulate an "agreement as to terms and realities" with other individuals. Socialized agreement as to terms is one thing, for men must have a common means of verbal intercourse. Socialized agreement as to realities is quite another matter. It seems that Mr. Rothschild has confused the two.

But it is in his analysis of the God-concept that the author manifests the flaw that is radical in all kinds of modern idealism. Man must organize the minutiae of life into a hierarchy of values, we are told. Now, says Mr. Rothschild, some things are more real than others, for they represent larger meanings and greater values. The illustration he gives is the human body, which is taken by him to have more meaning than its component cells; it is a larger synthesis, he says, a higher organization of significances. In his hierarchy of values there is no top, short of what he calls the Absolute. Only this Absolute, he believes, has *full* reality, and everything else is merely symbolic, tentative, incomplete.

This underlying reality, though for us it is nothing in itself, is yet that which gives everything else its meaning and reality, which conditions it, limits it, and defines it.

None the less, we are told that this so-called Absolute, which to us is nothing in itself, must be conceived by us as being objectively real, for *unless we assume its existence* we cannot have confidence in the hard and fast world which we see about us. In other words, the Absolute has full reality, yet to us it is nothing in itself. We must assume its existence and we must conceive it as being objectively real; yet it is the one thing we can never know, for in itself it is nothing to us. Thus the author sets forth what he calls the philosophical basis of all mature god-concepts.

Mr. Rothschild's idealism, in other words, is anthropocentric, founded upon the principle of all-inclusive immanentism, and marked by the same philosophical weaknesses as characterize all systems of cosmology which begin and end with man alone. Definitely opposed to such systems there is the theocentric idealism of the stream of thought which comes to us from Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and the generations of thinking men who have made our culture what it is. That stream of thought flows from a conception of the universe which holds that all the reality of being, order, activity, is ultimately grounded in one self-subsistent Being who is at once immanent and transcendent and who is also the last end to which all reality is ordained.

As to the epistemological problem of the *how* of our knowing, the moderate realism of the mediaeval disciples of Aristotle offers us an answer that the ordinary man will find far more intelligible than Mr. Rothschild's proposed solution. In this traditional view, all knowledge begins with sense impressions. Through them and by them alone the mind makes contact with what is not itself. We begin with sensible experience. There we gain a foothold in the territory of being. From sensible experience we gain the concrete element of the content of the idea; the mind then takes this impression of the concrete and fashions it into an idea. This is the theory summed up in the classical phrase that the idea is a mental product with a basis in external reality (*formaliter in mente, fundamentaliter in re*). Thus on the one hand free play is allowed to the vital processes of mind which in their last analysis centre around the idea, and on the other hand due allowance is made for a direct contact with external reality. There is therefore a clear distinction between the order of the conceptual and the order of the real, a distinction which is painfully lacking in Mr. Rothschild's work.

The book is marked by an utter want of due appreciation of the continuity of philosophical thought. If human reason be anything except the deceptive aspiration after the utterly inaccessible which Mr. Rothschild makes it out to be, surely the pioneer labours of those who have gone before cannot prove worthless to us. The truth of twenty-three centuries ago is still the truth of today. Instead of attempting to sketch new hierarchies of values, it were a wiser task to strive to add to the common fund of philosophical doctrine which has come to us from the wisdom of the centuries. By such an effort the thinkers of our time would more effectively help our puzzled generation to adjust the disordered balance of its life.

CHAS. F. RONAYNE

The Prussian*

THIS book is very different from its ballyhoo. And this reviewer—notwithstanding a considerable appetite for military literature—found most of it dreadfully dull.

It differs from its ballyhoo because it is concerned only with one elementary phase of military preparation and because its 360-odd pages contain only one ugly and lurid flash of sensationalism. The original German title "Space and Population in the World War" indicates its contents more accurately. "Geography, National Resources and Temperament, Elementary Strategy in the World War, Together With Exhortations to the German Spirit and Certain Primer Class Suggestions for Future Strategy", would really fill the bill.

The influence of geography on war is obvious enough and is traced for us in careful, plodding paragraphs. But on top of this the author overstresses the influence of climate. Although it is quite true that a man usually does his best under the climatic and other conditions to which he is accustomed, humanity is more adaptable than is suggested here. For instance the best troops of the Indian army are the British regiments, and the best French troops in Morocco are not the native levies but the Foreign Legion.

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* GERMANY PREPARES FOR WAR *by Ewald Banse* (HARCOURT, BRACE. 357 pp. $3.00).

From climate the author passes to race. American racialists will find their familiar "Nordics" and "Mediterraneans" in his pages, but the "Alpines" are absent, and strange conglomerations of "Phalians", "Dinarics", and "Alarodians" are present. What these terms mean the reviewer does not know, nor is he certain that they mean anything worth knowing.

Next comes history. The Holy Roman Empire is assumed to have been a national German state; although Fustel de Coulanges has proved beyond reasonable doubt that even its founder Charlemagne had only a few doubtful drops of German blood, every sophomore knows it was never national in conception, and to the end indiscriminately included masses of Latins, Slavs, et cetera. Further back, we are told that the tiny little units of Auxiliary troops in the Roman Army whose commanders took over local government in the West during the Fifth Century were (a) "Teutonic" or at least "Nordic" in blood and (b) numerous enough to affect the racial stock of the populous Roman province into which they came—all this in the teeth of Fustel, Cheesman, Wiener, and masses of careful, modern historical work on the Dark Ages in general and the later Roman Army in particular.

Turning from past to present, the Germans are an ineffably noble and peace-loving race with a few little practical shortcomings due to their greatness of soul. The French too are heroic, and in some respects superior to the Germans—an astonishing pair of admissions. The English and Americans are formidable but calculating and far baser than the Germans. The Italians are contemptible except for some few North-Italians who enjoy the priceless boon of Teutonic ancestry. All this part is as tedious a farrago of nationalistic rant as can be found outside of the swelling pages of Winston Churchill. And Churchill at least writes tolerable rhetoric, whereas the only epigram of Banse that survives translation is: "The internationalist is a bastard in blood and a eunuch in intellect." Credit where credit is due, that saying is both pointed and not entirely untrue.

After certain chapters full of abuse of Germany's late allies, Professor Banse seems to urge his country to take on Italy, France, and England all together. Seeing that England's present power is purely military, in that it depends upon her navy without which her colonial system would fall to pieces, he advises a joint German-Irish invasion of her home island. Now it is perfectly true that such an invasion if successful would break up the British Empire and doubtless transfer the British Indian and African territories to the victor. But there remains the preliminary difficulty of putting an invading army into England in the face of the British fleet. France, Banse considers a much tougher nut to crack. He hopefully suggests a German annexation not only of Belgium but of a wide strip of northeastern France including Belfort, Verdun and all the eastern fortifications, the Argonne and the right bank of the Somme to its mouth, and this he calls a modest proposal. The French inhabitants of the annexed districts, he blandly suggests, might emigrate into what was left of France which is underpopulated anyhow. Yet even this does not satisfy him, for he realizes that the strength of France is not external to herself like England's but lies in her people, especially in her "predominantly Nordic" French upper class. Here is his remedy:

> Since this Germanic element is France's main generator of vital energy . . . one of the most important tasks for the establishment of peace on earth is the extermination, as far as that is possible, of this Germanic element. Ruthlessly conducted wars which will reduce the numbers of this French warrior-caste; transportation of detachments of them to an eastern Germany of the future, where they would soon become Germanized; crossbreeding of those that remain with Southerners and Negroes; . . . progressive limitation of population; all these are the possible means to the fall and decline of France.

Oh triply distilled essence of stuffed shirts and boiled owls! Oh wondrous blending of the butcher and the learned fool! Oh priceless ammunition for anti-German propaganda in future wars! In short, Oh Prussian ass!

But perhaps the strangest things in the book are its assumptions concerning military theory. It takes for granted that future wars will be like 1914-18, only more "total" and more "absolute"; all Germans are exhorted to take part. Now in the first place the enormous armies and fleets characteristic of the late unpleasantness were supported on the humble but necessary foundation provided by the taxpayers and bond-buyers of the world; in 1914 both classes were fat; today they are thin. Not to speak of weapons and ammunition, a fighting man needs food, clothing, and shelter, all of which cost money. If you begin "conscripting" capital it simply disappears because the things which yesterday were thought to have value become worthless. If you conscript labour you must have armies of overseers to make your unwilling slaves work. If you devastate the countryside you produce deserts in which you yourself cannot live. Even with the best will in the world, the recent performance could not be repeated on the same scale. Nor is it at all certain that governments would long be supported with the same goodwill as before, if indeed that goodwill were forthcoming at all. Over a hundred years ago Clausewitz, the Prussian with a Polish name who is still greatest among the philosophers of war, wrote the epitaph of military exaggeration. Since I am dealing with a Prussian professor like Banse I will give chapter and verse: the passage will be found in the book *On War*, book VIII, chapter III, section B, "Of the Magnitude of the Object of the War and the Efforts To Be Made":

> As in war the want of sufficient exertion may result not only in failure but positive harm, therefore the two sides respectively seek to outstrip each other, which produces a reciprocal action. This might lead to the utmost extremity of exertion, if it were possible to define such a point. But then regard for the amount of the political demands would be lost, the means would lose all relations to the end, and in most cases this aim at an extreme effort would be wrecked by the opposing weight of forces within itself.

In other words not only the military effort but the entire social order would collapse or be overthrown by revolution, if indeed both revolution and collapse did not occur. It would be hard to describe better the state of affairs threatened in the French mutinies of 1917, perfectly realized in the Russian revolution, and almost perfectly realized in the German revolution of 1918.

After reading Banse's little studies of this or that nation, the reviewer yields to the temptation of doing one himself. Here it is: the German-speaking peoples of Europe constitute a mass of perhaps eighty millions which has never possessed political unity and is unlikely ever to achieve it. They are a soft, sentimental people with many talents and virtues. They are industrious, in normal times their sentimentality is of a kindly sort, and their vague aspirations find expression in beautiful music. On the other hand they are strangely submissive to strong government. In Prussia in the northeastern Germanies a harsh and repellent but powerful military machine appeared; under Bismarck it became the chief Germanic state, imposing its authority on about half of the German-speaking peoples. These it infected with an almost insane pride —Banse's book is abundant evidence that that insanity has survived the Prussian defeat of 1918. After Prussia's defeat the subsequent peace-settlement erred in that it was neither a peace of reconciliation nor one of political destruction: it amputated and angered Prussianized Germany but left intact Prussia's authority over the greater part of Bismarck's empire. Prussia is now again preparing for war. When she is ready she will strike. Probably she will then be defeated in short order—although only after she has done more damage—and a peace destroying her power will be definitely and finally imposed upon her. For she has shown an amazing ability to federate the world against herself and seems likely to repeat that achievement.

HOFFMAN NICKERSON

The Case for Monarchy*

THE monarchy which Sir Charles Petrie defends in this vigorous polemic is the hereditary monarchy—traditional, totalitarian, corporative—which developed in Europe after the Renaissance; and he puts it forward as the only cure for the greedy factionalism which has brought low the modern liberal democratic state. An historian himself, as well as an able commentator on modern politics for *The English Review*, he rests his case largely on the historical argument, which for him is "unanswerable".

In approaching the history of the past three hundred years from an uncompromisingly monarchical viewpoint, Sir Charles renders an extremely valuable service of re-interpretation; and in this respect he ranges himself with Belloc, Chesterton, Maurras, Jacques Bainville, Pierre Gaxotte, and others who have been helping to repair the damage wrought by the liberal historians who have monopolized the field since the beginning of the nineteenth century. As to his particular monarchical thesis, it is difficult to do more than sketch its outlines; for its effectiveness lies in the multitude of his examples and the eloquence with which his cause inspires him.

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* MONARCHY *by Sir Charles Petrie* (EYRE & SPOTTISWOODE. 309 pp. 10/6).
FRENCH ROYALIST DOCTRINES SINCE THE REVOLUTION *by Charlotte Touzalin Muret* (COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS. 326 pp. $3.00).

To monarchy in England he devotes about a third of the book. Its downfall, he believes, began when Henry VIII gave the confiscated lands of the Church into private hands, thus setting up the vested interest that was ultimately to pare away most of the royal power. Charles II he considers the last English King in the true tradition—"the last . . . who not only actually governed the country, but was incomparably abler than any of his ministers". From that time forward the Throne has been progressively shorn of power, either directly at Whig hands or as a result of Whig influence upon such sovereigns as Victoria; though recent years have seen an upswing at least in prestige. To the waning power of the King, Sir Charles attributes the present hold of plutocracy on the country, and he demands a reassertion of that power to combat it—specifically through the restitution to the Throne of direct revenues from the Crown Lands, thus restoring the King's financial independence of Parliament; and through the frequent presence of the King at Cabinet meetings. These are suggested as first steps toward a full recapture of the royal prerogatives, accompanied by a nullification of the effects of universal suffrage, and the ultimate establishment of a corporate state.

Another third of the book is devoted to a similar historical analysis of monarchy in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Central Europe, and the extra-European countries. He stresses the fact that France has never counted so strongly in the councils of

Europe since the passing of the Bourbons. Napoleon I he condemns as a self-seeking usurper, powerless to perpetuate his régime; Louis Philippe is a contradiction of monarchy in that he represented one class alone. In the Count of Chambord's decision to reject the throne on the issue of the tricolor he sees a misdirected cleaving to principle which lost France her chance of greatness for decades, plunging her in a republican darkness to which the present royalist movement (the Action Française he considers incapable of political action) promises to bring no light. Of Spain he is more hopeful. That she has accomplished so much in the past on such scanty resources is primarily due to the monarchy; the Carlist division was a blunder which will shortly be repaired by the death without issue of the aged Carlist claimant; and Alfonso, who lost his throne largely through his temperamental inability to take advantage of Primo de Rivera's popularity, has learned his lesson and will come back to establish a corporate régime in Spain. In Central Europe a Hapsburg restoration, though perhaps not over exactly the same territories, is the only hope for peace; and this is a strong political likelihood. In Germany the Hohenzollerns, effective kings of Prussia but false to their obligations as Emperors of Germany, have been disgraced forever by the flight of the Kaiser in 1918; dragging down with them the representatives of a truly German monarchical principle such as the Wittelsbachs. Here hope for the future lies not in Hitler, whom Sir Charles summarily dismisses, but in a federation of small German kingdoms under an elective Emperor. Italy presents the best proof of the author's thesis that monarchy can be combined successfully with any form of government (he instances Italy and Belgium in this respect); for he attributes a large part of Mussolini's success to his frank utilization of the prestige and patriotic devotion of the house of Savoy.

Out of this historical analysis, which such a summary necessarily strips of all its provocative fire and vigour, and out of the general chapters which make up the balance of the book, there emerges a stimulating picture of the monarchical principle at work. For Sir Charles, monarchy is an all-inclusive system rather than a particular technique of government. The monarch alone can be counted on to place the national interest first and combat factionalism; monarchy raises the standard of public life, makes possible a sane internationalism, provides a means of coordinating the activities of political specialists in the national interest, assures the participation of traditional wisdom in the process of government, makes an emotional appeal which democracy cannot approach. One can point out that Sir Charles's enthusiasm sometimes leads him into surprising trivialities, as when he includes in his case against democratic diplomacy a condemnation of "third-rate politicians . . . with their ill-fitting clothes, their bad manners, and their unspeakable wives". One can quarrel more seriously with his conviction that non-hereditary forms of monarchy (the modern dictator), however necessary, are but temporary expedients. But the book is certainly useful, and on a certain type of reader will be effective.

Where most defenders of democracy will attack this book, however, is on the ground that Sir Charles's history of monarchy is really a history of the mistakes of monarchs, judged by the cascade of thrones which preceded and followed the World War. The reply, which is implicit in the book, is that in nearly every case monarchs have fallen because they misinterpreted the moves of their enemies and were insufficiently conscious of the central principles upon which alone their prerogatives can rest. It is to these principles that Mme. Muret has devoted her immensely useful *French Royalist Doctrines Since the Revolution*; and her book, in spite of its dispassionateness, is likely to have a stronger influence on the contemporary mind than Sir Charles's, if only indirectly. She has given an excellent summary, nowhere else available, of the currents of monarchical thought in France since the Revolution, into which she fits in their proper place, along with dozens of lesser men, such figures as De Maistre, Bonald, Chateaubriand, Benjamin Constant, Royer-Collard, Guizot, Blanc de St. Bonnet, the Count of Chambord and the Count of Paris, La Tour du Pin, and the Action Française group headed by Charles Maurras. The current of liberal monarchical thought, which Sir Charles is inclined to accept without criticism, she shows to have dried up in France with the apparent triumph of the Republic in the nineties: it is the current of authoritarian monarchy which is alive today. Out of Mme. Muret's summary of this latter current (in which La Tour du Pin, to whose neglected work she devotes an excellent chapter, plays a larger part, so far as theory is concerned, than Maurras) emerges a conception of monarchical social principles whose startling contemporaneity may perhaps be indicated by a few quotations:

. . . [La Tour du Pin] was severe in his judgment of capital as it exists today, but he was resolutely opposed both to its destruction and to its transfer to the State. Men must be owners, but ownership means responsibility rather than enjoyment. . . . Property is the basis of society only if it is reasonably accessible to all. . . . The social body is like the real body, with vital organs, which are the family, the home, property, and groups of all sorts, professional and local. By substituting the individual for the group, the Revolution sowed disorder everywhere. . . . Men must have certain personal rights, and also certain common rights, which it is the duty of government to recognize. . . . The true basis of political institutions is the association of men according to their functions. Thus only is a sense of social solidarity developed. . . .

Here, in the view of a monarchist Catholic Frenchmen of the middle nineteenth century, is an exact description of the social principles upon which true Fascism rests. Mme. Muret's despairing conclusion that the principle of monarchy can never be re-established in a world ever more thoroughly impregnated, through mass education, with "ideas of democracy and equality", can only be explained by her apparent ignorance of the accomplishments of Fascist Italy along the very lines she seems to approve. Indeed it is men like Mussolini who, far from representing a negation of monarchy, have been almost alone to take up its social principles, and who represent the force most likely to re-establish them in an a-moral and materialistic age. Had Sir Charles Petrie's fallen monarchs realized these principles as clearly, the world today might offer a very different face.

MARVIN MCCORD LOWES